

DEAD MAGIC™

SECRETS AND SURVIVORS



A Tome of Lost Cultures and Civilizations for **Mage: The Ascension®**

DEAD MAGIC

TM

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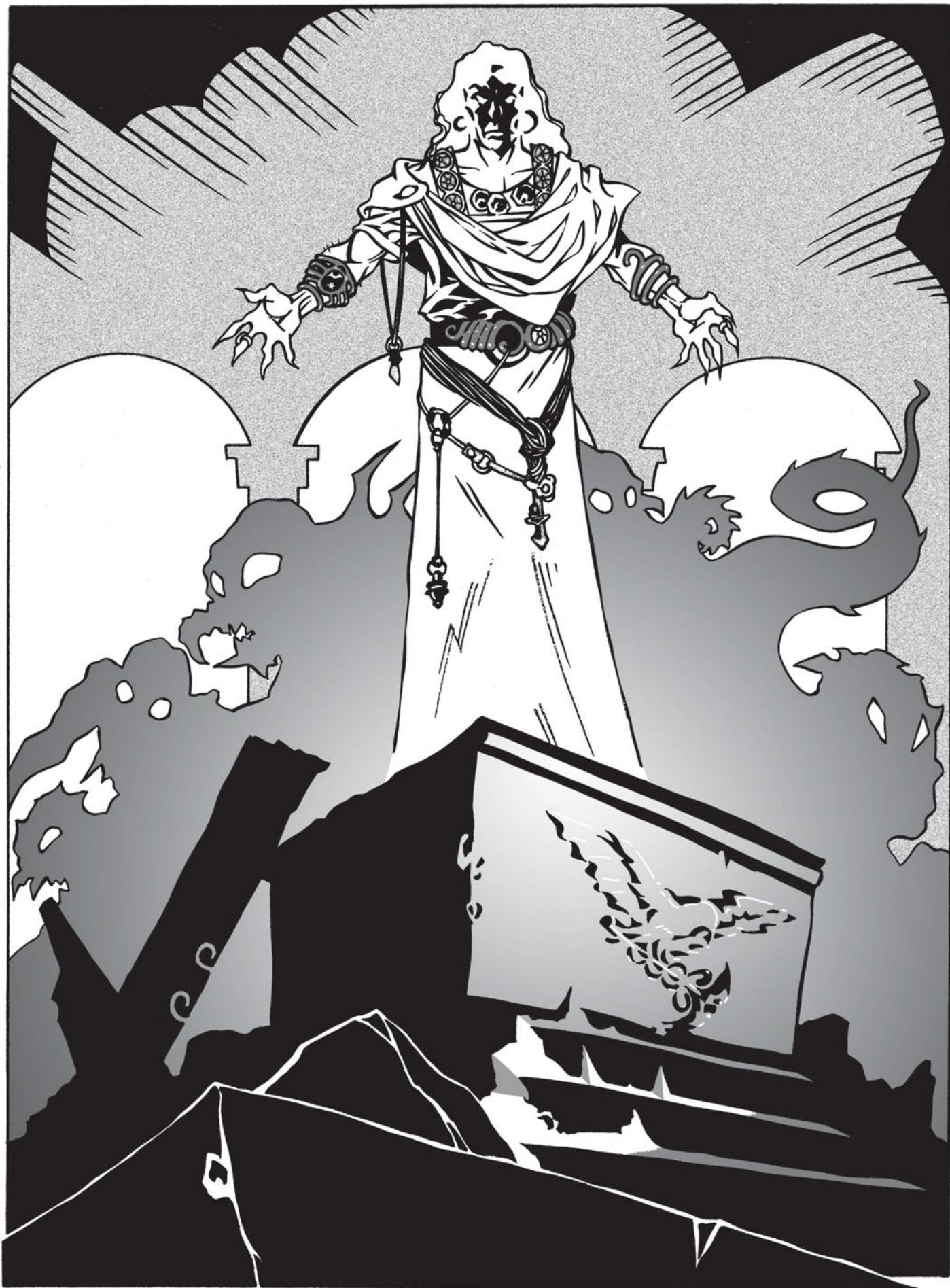
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PROLOGUE: THE IDES OF FEBRUUS



How long? How long had it been, the high priest wondered, since he had first been imprisoned? A long time had passed, Larth was sure of that. Thousands of generations of spider, beetle and worm had played out their sad little lives in front of him, illuminated by the glowing nimbus that surrounded the ancient Etruscan. And the murals of his tomb, whose colors had once been so vivid, had faded to muted hues where they had not worn away entirely. Larth had watched it all. A mortal mage would have been left insensate by the magic that bound the high priest, but Larth had ceased to be mortal long before he had been entombed.

Still, the swirling nimbus of light that surrounded Larth and wove time and space into a net to trap him had long ago begun to fail. Where it had once glowed so bright as to illuminate his entire tomb, the light now barely illuminated the figures of the fishermen in the mural opposite him. Another century, Larth imagined, perhaps two, and he would be free. Almost no time at all for one such as he. Then, at last, he would learn what had transpired in Tarchna since his imprisonment.

Because his tomb had remained sealed since the night the triumvirate of magi from Rome's Cult of Mercury had ambushed him, Larth had long ago prepared himself for the worst. If upstart Rome had not conquered his beloved Tarchna, surely the priests who

knew of his home among the city's dead would have come to free him from this awful prison. But they had not come, nor had his fellow *lucomones* from the other city-states, though their powers of divination must have told them of his plight. No, the only possibility that made any sense was that the Romans had wanted Larth eliminated before launching an attack against Tarchna and had sent their lackeys in the Cult of Mercury to ensure this was done. That Tarchna's priests had never come to his tomb afterward meant the attack must have succeeded. That the *lucomones* had never come meant that Tarchna was only the first of the surviving Etruscan states to be attacked. Even without his long-lost powers of divination, it had always been clear that not just Tarchna, but Etruria itself had been subdued by the upstart republic. How long ago had it been? How long since his people, his nation, all he'd ever cared for had fallen to dust?

Suddenly, sounds interrupted Larth's reverie. Sounds like something was scraping on the masonry of his tomb. Then light, dazzling light. It had been so long since Larth had seen any light besides that radiating from his prison. Could the light he had thought still so bright have really been so dim? The high priest's ancient eyes struggled to adjust to this new light's brilliance. As they did, Larth could just make out the form of a woman stepping in front to face him — at least, the priest thought it to be a woman. The strange garb she wore made it difficult to discern gender in the blinding light now flooding Larth's tomb.

In a strange language, the... woman... yes, Larth was sure his rescuer was a woman now... she addressed someone off to his right. The priest saw no one there. Then, he concentrated, his eyes piercing the veil between worlds. Aha, a shade, also strangely garbed. So this was to whom the woman spoke. If it still beat, Larth's heart would have leapt into his throat. This woman was a speaker for the dead, as he had been. Could it be that Etruria still stood? That the priesthood still existed and had finally come to free him? Then, the woman addressed Larth, and his dead blood grew colder still.

At first, she addressed Larth in the same language she had spoken to the shade in, but when she saw Larth's brow furrow at its incomprehensibility, she spoke again in a tongue Larth was quite familiar with, one he'd heard over and over again during his imprisonment as he replayed the details of his ambush and capture in his mind. Latin. The woman spoke Latin. Could it be that the scions of Romulus still ruled above in Tarchna after so very long? Reflexively, Larth attempted to raise his

right hand to stop the hated words from coming — and it moved.

Larth had thought that the glow from the chains of time and space that imprisoned him had merely faded in intensity in comparison to the flood of outside light that now illuminated his tomb, but there was more to it than that. The woman entering the tomb had brought something with her, something that had worn away at the magics that bound Larth. The net woven round the high priest was fragile now, little more than a shimmering cobweb.

"...oh, ancient scion of Caine," the woman continued, "reveal to your descendants' lowly servant how she might free your incorruptible flesh from this tomb that has held you for so very long."

Inconceivable. Not only was this woman prattling on in the hated tongue of Rome; now she'd mistaken him for one of the undead tomb skulkers that infested lesser lands' necropoli and fed off their citizens. Had the Romans conquered Etruria and then, in their ignorance, allowed the grave demons — demons the *lucomones* had banished to the simpler lands surrounding Etruria — to overrun the sacrosanct tombs of Larth's forefathers? Larth had to know.

Larth flexed the divine spark that burned within him, and the magic binding him for untold centuries was sloughed off like so much dead weight. He took a step forward and smiled wickedly at the woman who had so stupidly dared to invade his home and prison spouting Latin and mistaking him from the accursed of the Hebrew god. Too late, the woman seemed to realize that something had gone terribly awry with her and her master's plan, whatever it might have been.

"Please," she pleaded, still speaking in the hated tongue, "I'm here to help you."

"Oh, do not concern yourself over that," Larth spat, also in Latin, "you shall indeed help me."

Like the worms that forever managed to wriggle their way inside of Larth's tomb, the high priest's mind slipped into the mind of the undead's thrall. The creature screamed and then began babbling in her annoying nonsense tongue. No matter, the priest didn't need to understand her language to learn what he needed to know. Images flooded his mind. Of undead creatures seeking one of their own elders entombed in... Tarquinia.... Of how one of these entities intended to devour the ancient's blood and very soul and of the lore of death they all hoped to plunder from both tomb and soul. Incensed, Larth pushed deeper into her mind to learn of Tarchna and Rome. And he learned what little she knew, but enough to confirm his worst fears. Etruria

was long dead. Rome too, though not before the upstarts built an empire greater than Alexander's and held it for more than a thousand years.

Rage welled up inside Larth. He'd been entombed for more than two thousand years. His nation and all its people had been wiped from the pages of history, with little more than a smattering of examples of its art and literature having survived to the present. The final irony was that what little was known was passed on by Etruria's conqueror, Rome.

It was just too much to bear. Larth's mind withdrew from the woman, whom he now knew to be called Lucrezia della Passaglia. She dropped hard to the floor of the tomb. This apparently alerted the shade, whom Larth now knew was called Anton, to the fact that something had to be done to save his mistress, so he stupidly moved to interpose himself between the high priest and the woman.

Larth was not amused.

Larth reached within his robes and drew forth a simple silver key, pointing it past the blustering shade at a mural of a set of double doors flanked by two men garbed much like Larth himself. "Mighty Vanth," the priest began speaking in a language dead for two millennia, "grant me, your humble priest, egress to thy realm."

A seam appeared between and around the two painted doors, and then, quite suddenly, they swung back to reveal a twisting hallway of black basalt, wherein dark noisome things skittered and chattered. Catching sight of this, Anton's face contorted into a mask of absolute terror.

"Greetings, servants of Charun, Lord of the Dead," Larth spoke in his dead tongue, unmoved by Anton's plight. "I bid thee welcome to the lands of the quick and offer you these tender morsels as sacrifice. Do my will, and I promise you many, many more."

At this, a horrible buzzing erupted from the creatures' ranks, a buzzing not so much heard as felt. As Larth concentrated, the buzzing resolved itself into a chorus of voices, speaking as one. "What have you to offer, priest, that we may not just take?"

"I offer you freedom to indulge your darkest desires, oh Charontes. I offer you slaughter on a scale not seen in eons. I offer you the bodies and souls of all those usurpers who dwell in the city above. I would see them all butchered, their city razed and lost Tarchna resurrected atop the bones of their 'Tarquinia'."

"No, Great Nesna Nethshrac, do not do this thing," a voice called out in the mother tongue.

Larth whirled to see that two more oddly dressed people had dared to intrude upon his tomb, each bearing

a strange metal torch from which an amber glow radiated. "Who are you, that you speak the language of my people and would dare to stay my hand from its righteous vengeance?"

"My name is Massimmo Pallottino, and the members of my family are the last survivors of the Etruscan priesthood."

"Absurd," spoke Larth. "If that were true, you would certainly join me in my quest to punish the usurpers and bring back the glory of Etruria."

"Great Priest, those who brought ruin to your kingdom are long dead, their empire dust. The people in the city above are innocent of the crimes you would punish them for. My initiate and I sought to free you from your prison at long last and would have done so had not this woman, a servant of this land's vampiric *nigromancers*, not interfered."

"It matters not who freed me or their motivations for doing so. I was wrongfully imprisoned for more than two millennia while the people above picked clean the bones of my—our—civilization. They will be made to pay. The only question is whether you and the novice will stand with me or against me. What say you?"

"If you can not be dissuaded from your course of genocide, then we must stand against you."

"So be it. What say you, Charontes?"

From behind the portal, a veritable wave of the chittering, inhuman creatures rose up and then leapt through the door. Anton and Lucrezia vanished under their monstrous, dark-blue forms. "Your terms are agreeable to us, Nesna Nethshrac," they buzzed excitedly.

Massimmo began to speak the ancient charms of binding the beasts of the Underworld, but was struck by a flurry of the Charontes before he could bring his magic to bear against them.

"Hold them fast, but do not kill these two... yet," instructed Larth.

A pair of Charontes held Massimmo fast, and one narrowly grabbed hold of the mage's apprentice's right arm. Many others flooded outside like an ill wind, the violence of their exit extinguishing the lights that had illuminated the tomb's interior, and plunging the mausoleum into darkness.

At his wits' end, the apprentice mage hurled a minor spirit-wracking rote at the Charontes holding fast to his arm. Enraged, the creature wrenched the young man's arm back hard, bending it the wrong way at the elbow, and backhanded him across the face, its wicked claws drawing deep gashes across his eyes. The apprentice landed near the open door of the tomb,

scrambled awkwardly to his feet and ran staggering out the tomb's open door.

"Think about what you're doing, Nesna Nethshrac," Massimmo pleaded. "Our kind is charged with protecting the living from the Restless Dead that would harm them. We pledged our lives to that cause."

Larth turned to face the 'priest' suspended before him, eyes narrowing in anger. "I'll have you know, I died 20 years before I was imprisoned by the Roman dogs, and on the day I became immortal, I pledged my eternal half-life to protecting the people of Tarchna. In that I may have failed, to my eternal shame, but I will see to it that they are avenged, so help me gods. And no Roman sympathizer like you is going to stop me."

"Roman sympathizer? Listen to yourself, Great Priest. Think. I am no sympathizer—there are no sympathizers. What's more, there are no Romans. The Roman Empire fell to barbarians hundreds of years ago."

"I will hear no more of this. Charontes, teach this 'priest' the value of silence."

At this, the two spirits tugged on the mage's arms. The right arm popped from its socket with a crack, and the man gritted his teeth hard, cold sweat pouring from his brow. There was a sharp gasp from the tomb's entrance.

Larth spun at this to find himself confronted with two more intruders on his sanctuary, a tall man with flaming red hair and a small, lean, raven-tressed woman.

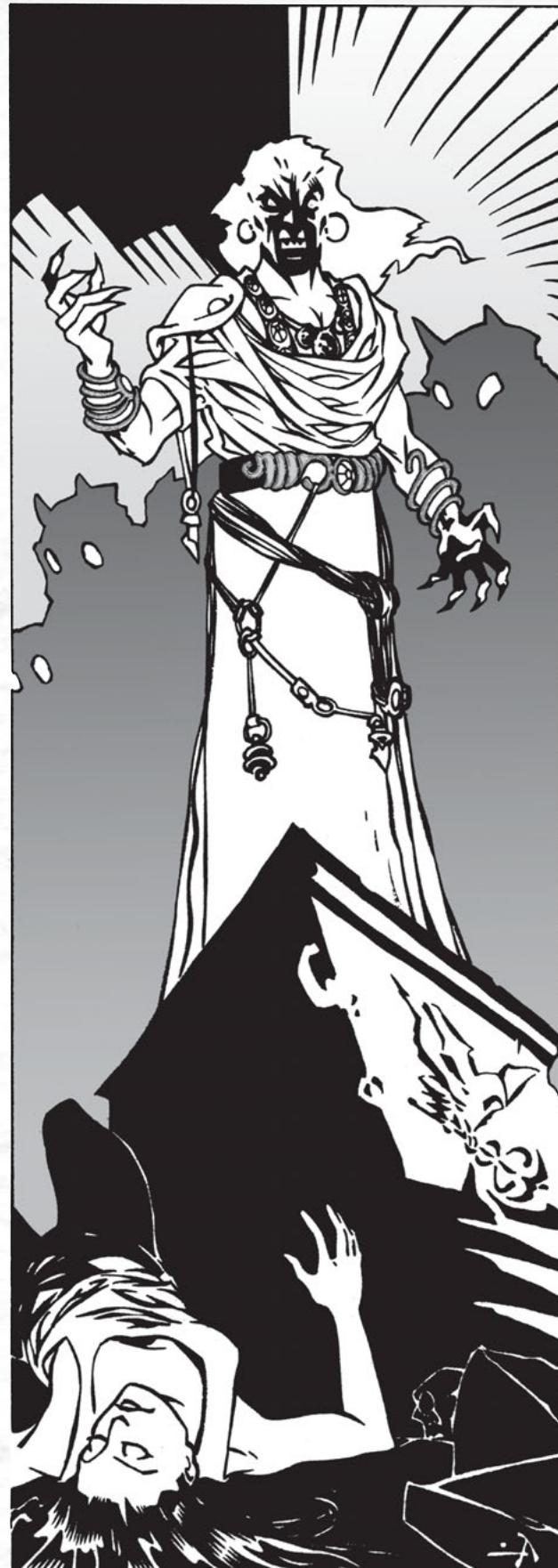
"More foreigners. Charontes, here are two new sacrifices for you. Kill the trespassers."

Needing little encouragement, the two Charontes hurled themselves at the newcomers but were stopped dead a meter distant by some unseen barrier. As the spirits struck the unseen ward, a medallion in the woman's outstretched hand glowed a cold blue. Larth recognized the symbol on the medallion — the Seal of Solomon.

Larth whirled on the injured mage lying on the ground at his feet, his face contorted by rage. "The Cult of Mercury," the ancient priest screamed. "You claim to be a priest of Etruria and dare to ally yourself with the lapdogs of Rome."

"No," Massimmo protested, raising his good arm in a gesture of peace. "It's not like that. They aren't what you think. And I didn't know about—"

"Silence, false priest," shouted the Nesna Nethshrac, pointing his finger at Pallottino. "Enough of your lies. I, Larth Fulumchva, Lucomones and Nesna Nethshrac to the dodecopoli of Etruria, name thee false priest, blasphemer and traitor to the Etruscan people. In the name of all that was done to myself and our people, I give to



thee the Release of the Agonizing Death. May Vanth flay the flesh from your shade and Charun hammer your soul to jelly."

At these words, Pallottino began to writhe screaming in agony on the floor of the tomb, only to explode into dust a moment later.

Throbbing with power, his divine spark now fanned to a blazing brand, Larth turned to deal with the intruders, when the fire blazing within himself began to burn him. Wherever this inner fire erupted from, he began to rot, the years he had denied to the grave for so long now taking their toll on his undying form.

Taking full advantage of Larth's debility, the tall man raised a wand of gleaming orichalcum at the priest. Its end erupted with fire and an earsplitting crack like a thunderbolt, and Larth felt his torso explode, showering the rear of his tomb with blood and gore.

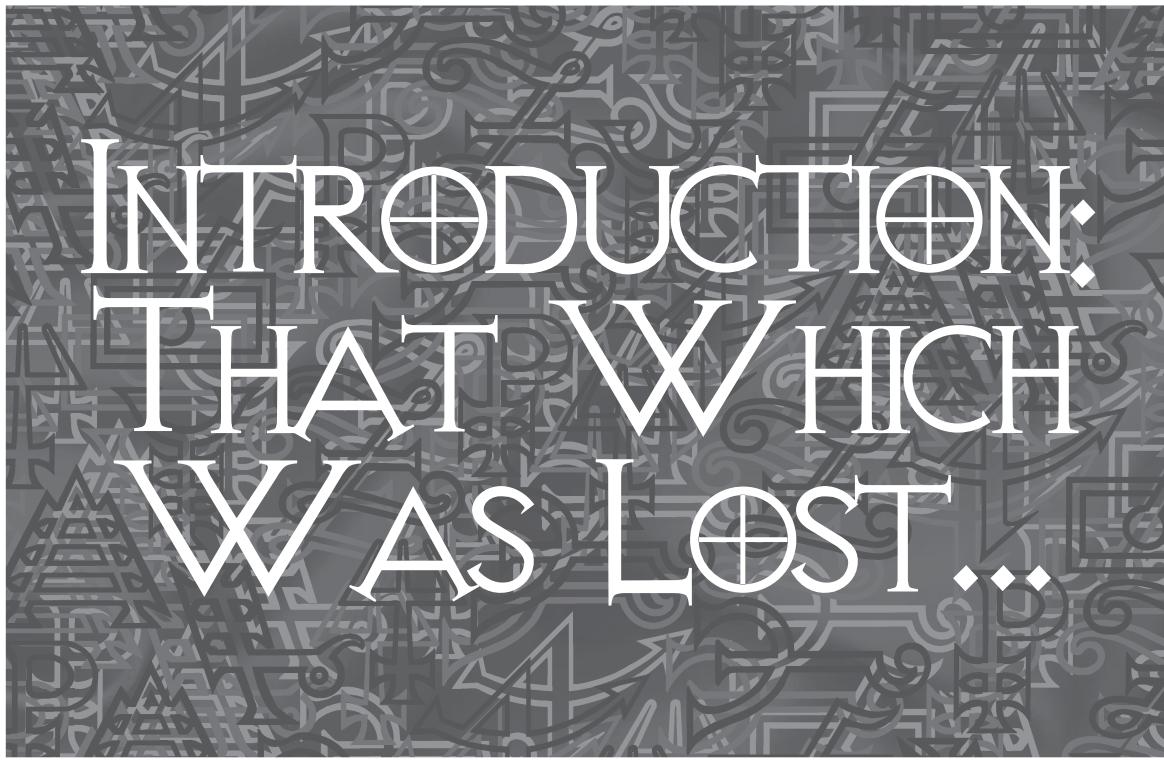
The pain was incredible, but Larth knew such an injury would not, could not, kill him. Still, he was terribly injured, and his own magic had burned him. He would not be imprisoned again. Now was the time to flee. Calling to mind the rote he'd used earlier, Larth again pointed his silver key at the door mural, intending to transport himself to a safe portion of the Underworld. Instead, the portal opened to reveal enormous roiling clouds of spirit jetsam, ridden by a hundred Charontes.

Suddenly the terrible burning erupted from inside him again as he lingered on the edge of the open spirit doorway; there was another sharp report from behind, then another, and a sudden loss of balance as he fell through the portal. Falling end over end, he saw the portal far above him wink out of existence.

Larth's broken body came to rest with a crash. Above the high priest, a whirling mass of Charontes faltered in their flight, only to dive down and land next to him. Larth struggled to make his broken, rotted form rise, but to no avail. As he lay there, waiting for the Charontes to fall upon and devour him, Larth heard their incessant buzzing grow to a fever pitch. And then, he heard a voice behind the buzzing, or over it, or within. It whispered to him reassuringly, promising surcease from his pain and sanctuary amongst her brood.

"The End is nigh," the kindly voice whispered. "The time of Epopteia comes, when your kind will be undone. But you will survive this time of trouble, as you have survived so very much. And I will help you to grow strong again, that you might serve me."

And as she spoke, Larth saw in his mind's eye the future unfold before him as it had so many centuries ago. And what he saw was both wonderful and terrible beyond imagining.



This second volume of the **Dead Magic** series is titled **Secrets and Survivors**. The magics explored herein are largely forgotten by the modern world—but they’re not exactly dead. Someone, somewhere, still practices these old ways, and can be approached to teach them to a new generation. That doesn’t mean it will be easy finding these rare, few mages, or that they’ll want to be found, much less be willing to teach their ancient secrets to whomever has the temerity to track them down. These ways have been kept hidden for a reason, either because their practitioners despise the modern world and don’t want to taint their old traditions by subjecting them to it, or because they hold dangerous power their wielders don’t want to share—or that rivals don’t want to see unearthed.

The Traditions can no longer rely on their own ways to escape the predicament they’re in, with the

Avatar Storm raging across the Gauntlet between worlds, their Masters missing in action, and the Technocracy cementing its power. It’s time to fan out across the world and rediscover what was lost, reconnect with the forgotten magical heritages of many cultures, and discover new methods of reaching for the unattainable: Ascension.

ROGUE COUNCIL TRAVELLOGUES

Spurring this new era of discovery is the enigmatic Rogue Council. The Sphinx sends messages to mages across the world with mysterious edicts and clues, urging them to explore the forgotten corners of the planet for lost magic that still inexplicably survives in the hands of unknown mages or elder spirits.

As with anything the Sphinx is involved in, controversy arises. Many wholeheartedly follow these messages,

but some distrust them and wonder what their real purpose is: To truly reawaken a lineage to the past, or to rouse entities best left undisturbed? Some mages so greatly fear this endeavor that they actively attempt to thwart it, going so far as to attack mages who pursue such research. Of course, the Technocracy also distrusts anything these Reality Deviants engage in, and it also moves to investigate these messages from the Sphinx — apparently, these messages aren't just delivered to the Traditions, spurring speculation about a mad purpose to turn both sides against one another in open warfare.

The truth behind all this furious activity is unknown, but even those who side with the Sphinx wonder: Are the End Times finally upon us? Is Ascension truly at hand? Or is this the last gasp of a dying worldview, the desperate writhing of magic as it finally dies, killed by the victory of the Technocratic paradigm?

For more information on the Rogue Council, see **Manifesto: Transmissions from the Rogue Council**.

FROM EAST TO WEST

Dead Magic 2: Secrets and Survivors explores old ways from around the world and from different eras. While the magics of the Australian aboriginal natives never really died out, the magic of ancient Etruria hasn't had a true practitioner since the fall of Rome. Mages seeking these secrets — no matter how alive or dead — should keep one admonishment in mind: Tread carefully.

Sad Islands in Strange Seas: Polynesia explores the South Seas islands and their magical traditions — largely ignored by modern Traditionalists and Technocrats alike. From Hawaii and Easter Island to Samoa and New Zealand, the ways of the *kahunas* are explored, including the fascinating powers of *tikis*, *tatus* and *mokomai* (head-hunting).

Wide Awake in the Dreamtime: Native Australia reveals the hidden landscape of the Dreamtime, empowering the spirit world of Australia. Only those who truly live on the land and are initiated by it can know the Dreaming — all others are blind to its gifts. But once you've tasted the Dreaming, you may not want to leave, for no other place will seem like home.

And the Beat Goes On: Shakti and Shiva takes us to exotic India and exposes us to forbidden Hindu rites dedicated to Shakti in her apocalyptic form of Kali, the World Destroyer. Also detailed is her husband, Shiva, whose followers vie with Kali's cultists to prevent the premature end of the world. Modern mages can involve themselves in this struggle and reap many magical secrets — but at what cost?

WARNING!

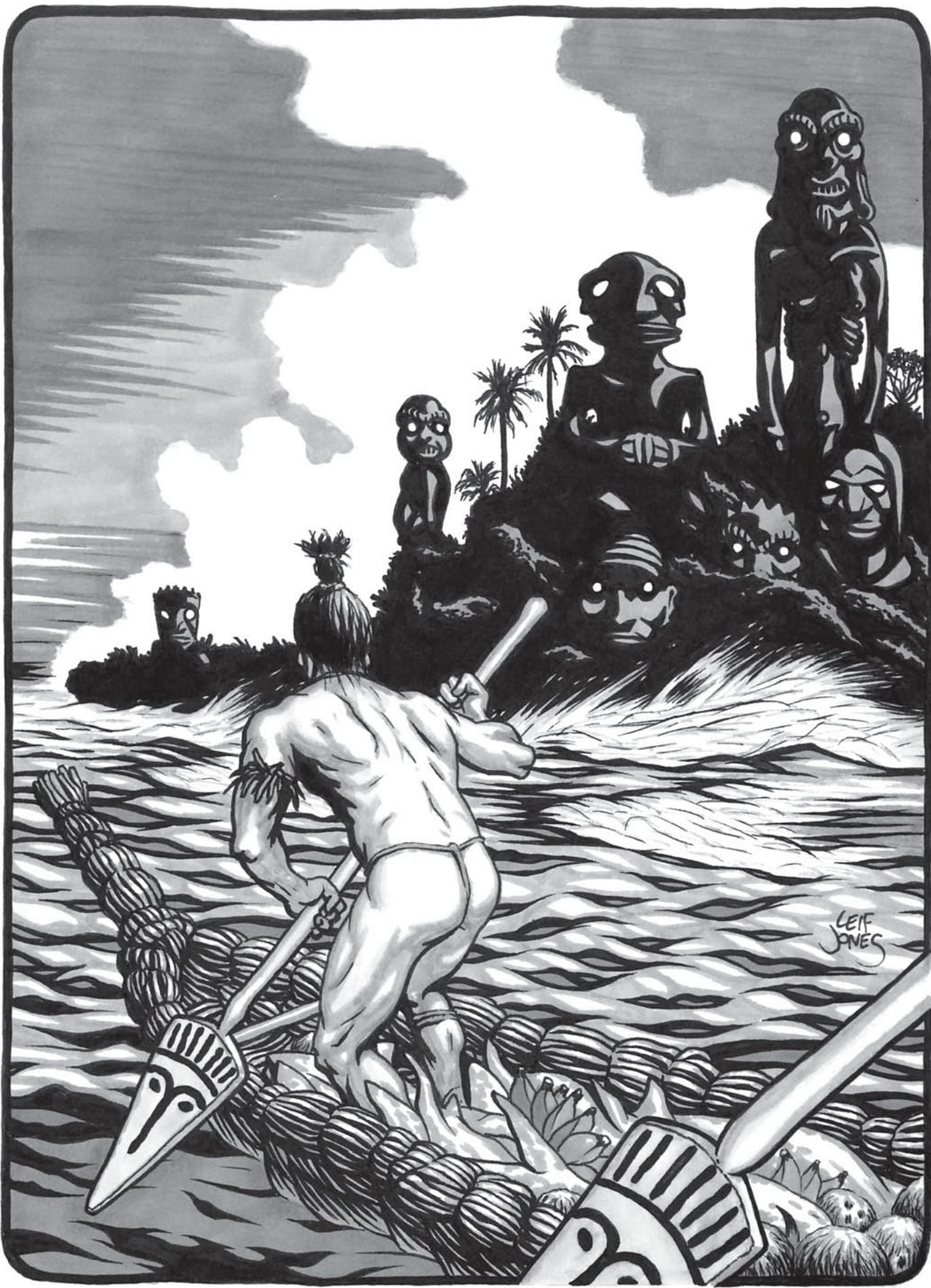
This book deals with some dark and nasty themes — things like Ragnarok, evil tikis dedicated to deep sea gods, an immortal liche, and Kali herself, the goddess of raw destruction. Oddly enough, there is no Black Dog Game Factory logo. That doesn't mean you shouldn't act mature when reading some of this material; we just figure that you know what to expect by now and don't need a logo to hold your hand and warn you away from the gritty stuff. Just to make it clear: this book is recommended for mature readers.

That said, we don't recommend you read this with salacious intent. These themes are explored in the context of the World of Darkness — a horror setting. They aren't here to provide splatterpunk thrills, but to honestly express the material covered — you can't talk about Kali without considering some disturbing images. Sure, this stuff can be spooky — that's part of the point — but it should also be fearsome. Don't lose track of the horror or shirk from the evil intent that some people display toward others. It's all part of playing a horror roleplaying game.

In the Shadows of the World Ash: The Norse delves into the ancient ways of runesinging and fate-weaving, still kept alive by a hidden few but usually taught only to those willing to relive the All-Father's sacrifice on the World Tree — a dangerous stunt not many mages could survive. The ways of the runes are harsh and unforgiving, but also powerful and brimming with wisdom from the wells of fate.

Singing by Moonlight: European Shamanism looks at the diverse practices of Celtic, Finnish, Germanic and Slavic peoples: the shamanic songs, spells and Wonders still remembered in epic and story, but rarely practiced by mages in this day and age. Some of these old ways still hold power and can be renewed by those willing to put in the hard years of study and fieldwork.

The Lost Empire: Etruria uncovers the supernatural secrets of the Etruscans, the civilization that birthed Rome but was later subsumed by it. *The Ides of Februus* prologue told the tale of the unearthing of an elder horror. This chapter reveals different perspectives on that event, along with rotes, Wonders and creatures once associated with Etruscan magic.



SAD ISLANDS IN STRANGE SEAS: POLYNESIA



It was raining in Seattle and the natives were happy. It had been a long, dry summer — thanks to global warming — and the city, used to being constantly washed clean, had begun to take on a nasty funk: The alleys reeked of stale piss and the whole arc of land around the Sound had developed a fishy odor.

Michael “Mutt” Eimut walked down Pike Street with his leather backpack full to bursting. He kept up a fast pace, his eyes scanning left and right for the Kon-Tiki restaurant, where he was supposed to have been 10 minutes ago. When he found it, his forehead crinkled a bit. The Kon-Tiki looked too forgotten to be real, too hokey to exist in the 21st century. The arcing outrigger beam poked up from the front of the A-frame structure and curved upwards. From its carved tip hung a cracked lamp that swung forlornly in the cold wind.

Mutt thought he might have seen places like this before — a lot of restaurants and hotels built in the early '60s tried to take on a patina of mystery. They put thatching over the shingles, added a few bamboo poles and gave everything an exotic Polynesian feel in order to pander South Pacific exoticism to Americans, for whom everything had been rendered banal by the thoroughly sterilized Eisenhower era.

There was no street number, but Kon-Tiki was clearly the place he was supposed to be. Mutt expected the dark, carved-wood door to be locked, but it opened smoothly.

Inside, Kon-Tiki was absolutely black. He considered the possibility that he might be walking into a Technocracy trap, and his stomach began to churn.

Mutt was preparing to call a moon spirit to provide some light when he heard a low, accented voice ask “What’s your name, boy?”

“Uh... Mutt,” replied the young mage.

“Good,” said the voice, “You’re the guy. I wasn’t sure. You’re early.”

“I’m late, actually.”

“You’re less late than anyone else has been. That makes you early.”

In the middle of the vast, open space, a bonfire roared to life in the center of a pool of placid water. In the firelight, Mutt noticed the profusion of grotesque, carved wooden idols staring at him from everywhere. Some were tall and free-standing, others perched on poles, looking down at him. Smaller ones rested on the dusty old chairs that hadn’t seen any use since Kon-Tiki closed down in 1973. He’d seen these carved idols before, and they’d always seemed silly, a remnant of particularly odd American taste. Now, however, in the firelight, there was something powerfully creepy about them.

A figure sitting in front of the flaming fountain rose and approached Mutt. The shadow offered its hand, and Mutt shook it, which seemed somehow odd or falsely intimate,

since the backlighting prevented Mutt from seeing the other man's face.

"My name's Momana. Call me Mo."

"Sure," said Mutt, figuring it was a fake name anyway. "So you can actually get me out of Seattle without getting caught?"

"So how hot on your heels are the Techies?"

"A Man in Gray and some MIBs showed up yesterday looking for me at my mom's place, but she told them I had moved out and hadn't given her my new address yet. They were inclined to wait around, but our house, which I awakened, was pretty hostile to them, so they said they'd be back later."

"Awakened your house, huh? Is that why they're on you?"

Mutt's voice took on a hard edge when he answered. "They're on me because I'm following the religious heritage of my people, the Salish tribe, and they don't like it."

"No need to get hostile with me, kid; I've lived it over, and over and over. That's why I help people in your shoes, yeah? Speaking of which, we'd better start making some moves toward getting you saved. You're sure you weren't followed?"

"I have a whole flock of raven spirits following me and they haven't seen a thing, so no, I don't think so. And can I see your face? Talking to you without seeing your face is getting creepy."

"Sure. But you might find that creepy, too." Mo gestured and a line of torches on poles flickered to life.

Mo's appearance startled Mutt, but he tried not to show it. The older man had deep grooves carved into his face and complex, spiraling tattoos that covered all of his exposed head and most of his neck. He looked vaguely Asian, but not quite, and the long hair briefly made Mutt think Mo might be from another Native American tribe.

"Wow," said Mutt. "Nice tattoos."

"They're not tattoos," said the older man bluntly. "They're *moko*. It's a Maori tribal tradition. The difference between a tattoo and a *moko* is like the difference between a doodle and a coat of arms: one is casual, the other is fundamental to the wearer's family and spiritual life."

Mutt looked around. The carved wood of the tikis bore a modest resemblance to the totem poles carved by his people and, thought of in that light, seemed almost comforting. "Is this the only place you could arrange to meet? It's kind of an odd choice, don't you think?"

"Don't knock it. We're safer here than any other place in Seattle."

"Why?"

"The tikis keep anyone from spying on us."

"These goofy old things?" said Mutt glancing at the big carved idols. "Yeah, if the Technocracy is scared by bad taste. These are just cheap knock offs anyway, right?"

"The cheesy ones that used to be here were. I made these and brought them from Ao Te Aroa myself."

"Oh," said Mutt. "You made these?"

"Yes."

"Wow," said the young man, "That takes a lot of skookum."

"A lot of...? Oh, yeah, it does. But somebody has to do this, right? Or else the world becomes a landscape of plastic and glass and chrome for as far as the eye can see, and that's not really my style."

"Mine either."

"So don't be knockin' Tiki. Maori tradition holds him in exceedingly high reverence. He was the first man and the first teacher. He taught the arts of magic to humanity and he still acts as an intermediary between the world of spirit and the world of things. And speaking of things, you got everything you're bringing?"

"Yeah," said Mutt, glancing at his leather backpack.

"If you need to make a bathroom stop, you'd better take care of it before we leave Kon-Tiki. We have to take my *waka* — my canoe — a long, long ways. On the ocean. Are you okay with that? You don't get seasick or anything, right?"

Mutt laughed.

"I said something funny, huh?"

"I'm in a lot of trouble if I can't deal with a canoe trip."

"You're right, but why do you say that?"

"My totem is Ocean."

Mo nodded approvingly. "Good. That should make things easier. Last guy I helped out this way, also a 'Speaker — city guy, yeah? — had Train as his totem. Guy was unstoppable: Great in a fight, great at getting around on land, but take him on the water he was useless."

"How'd that turn out?"

"Not so good, but we both lived. He had some other, uh, allies he could call on in a pinch, and it's good because we saw a lot of Tech action when we made a port call in San Francisco."

"That where we're going?"

"Nope. Won't even be stopping there this time around. Too dangerous these days."

"Then where are we going?"

"Beautiful, exotic Polynesia."

"Uh..." began Mutt. "That's pretty far, isn't it?"

Mo shrugged. "According to the Sphinx, it's exactly where you need to be."

"You from there?"

"Yup."

"Dreamspeaker?"

"Nope."

Mutt had assumed that Mo was a Dreamspeaker like him, and that that was why the older man had contacted him about leaving the city just when he needed it most. He found himself growing suddenly suspicious of the tattooed man.

"What Trad you from?"

"I'm not. I'm a *tohunga*."

"What's that?"

"That's what they call a mage in Ao Te Aroa. So, if you're all set, let's head down to the water then, yeah? No talking after we leave Kon-Tiki or the Techies might pick us up. Once we get a ways out to sea I'll give you the full spiel about where we're taking you."

They slipped out the front door, Mo locked it and they began the six-block hike through the rain to Puget Sound. Mutt found himself growing sad.

TE MOKO

The elaborate facial tattoos commonly worn by the Maori of New Zealand, called *moko* or *te-moko*, represent far more than just an urge to decorate the skin. Every marking in *te-moko* represents the individual's standing within his tribe, sub-tribe and family. The marks of *moko* show vocation and level of accomplishment as well as genealogy. If a man is a warrior, a portion of his facial markings represents that. If he is a *tohunga* (the Maori term for a mage) he has a mark to show that as well. Not only does the *moko* indicate its wearer's trade, separate marks reveal how accomplished he is at what he does, revealing at a glance if he is simply a man-at-arms or a battle-tested commander or, for a *tohunga*, whether he is (to use Tradition terms) an Initiate, an Adept or a Master.

Unlike the tattoos common in the western world, *moko* aren't applied with needles, but with a fine chisel called an *uhi*, commonly made from greenstone (jade) or albatross bone. In addition to its pigment, the *uhi* generally leaves deep grooves in the skin as well, granting the recipient's face a slight resemblance to carved wood. This isn't an accident. The Maori were (and still are) excellent craftsmen and carvers, and they use the same decorative motifs with every medium they carve on, whether it be wooden canoes, tikis, jade pendants or flesh.

The word for *moko* comes from the name of Ruamoko, the last (and *unborn*) child of Rangi, the Maori goddess of the earth. Ruamoko is the god of earthquakes and volcanism and his name means "the trembling current that scars the Earth." When the earth quakes, the Maori say that Ruamoko is kicking his mother's belly again. The Maori held that Ruamoko, through his earthquakes and volcanic activity, was responsible for the deep, uneven grooves they saw on the land and drew connections between the scars left on the earth by volcanic activity and the scars left by *moko*. *Te-moko*, consequently, links man to the primal gods as well as to his ancestors and has deeply spiritual connotations to the Maori.

While having a *moko* outside of Ao Te Aroa (New Zealand) may present significant social repercussions, any *tohunga* who does not get *te-moko* is at a profound disadvantage, because he has given up his spiritual connection to the gods as well as to his ancestors.

When they got to the water, Mo pointed out where his canoe was hidden.

Seattle had been improving the waterfront for a while to appeal to the city's rampant yuppie population; that luckily included putting in a number of bushes. From behind a row of bushes the two mages pulled a beautifully carved outrigger canoe and carried it to the water.

The two got in and started paddling. The canoe sliced cleanly through the water, and it amazed Mutt how quickly it went.

Once they'd gotten well away from land, Mo said, "I'm going to need to have you do a lot of the rowing. There will be times when I'll be doing... things to get us there faster and I might be able to talk, but I'll need my hands free. You okay with that?"

Mutt shrugged. "Sure. I can't believe you just left this canoe there where anybody could find it."

"People don't pay attention to anything these days. They're so used to being spoon-fed; if something isn't lit in neon, or if it doesn't come at them from their TV screen or computer monitor, they miss it. It's one of the pathetic consequences of the current paradigm. We call them unAwakened for a reason, right? Sure, somebody might have found it, but it's only a canoe, right? One of hundreds up in this area, and it's too big to steal easily, so they're not likely to bother with it. It's not like it flies or anything. At least," Mo paused a moment, "not without me in it, it doesn't."

Mutt and Mo paddled for a while. Mo kept looking up at the night sky, getting his bearings. When they were both paddling and he knew they were going in the right direction, Mo spoke again.

WHAT IS POLYNESIA?

"You know what I mean when I talk about Polynesia, right?"

"Uh, I don't know. It's like Hawaii, right?"

Mo sighed. "They don't really stress geography much in schools these days, do they?"

Mutt shrugged. "Depends on the school, I guess."

"Polynesia is the name given to the various islands throughout the South Pacific. Think of it as a triangle with its points at Hawaii, Ao Te Aroa and Rapa Nui."

"Where? I have no idea where those last two places are."

"Oh, I guess the *pakaha* terms would make more sense to you. Hawaii, New Zealand and, uh, what's it called... Easter Island. Or La Isla de Pascua, as it's called by its new owners. Nothing really Polynesian about Rapa Nui these days. All its original inhabitants died out, but I'll be getting to that. You ready for your lecture?"

"Uh, I guess."

"You'd better be, yeah? That's where we're headed now."

"What?!"

"Yeah, unless you'd rather stay in Seattle."

"No, man, I *really* need to get out of town."

"Well, there it is then. So where was I? The first Polynesians left southeast Asia and settled Tonga and Samoa

about 1000 BCE. That was enough for a while, yeah? But the fertility tikis did their job maybe just a little too well and before long the populations of both of those islands were straining the resources of the islands.

“These crazy voyages were made in double canoes, joined together by a wide central platform to transport and shelter people, taro roots, yams, chickens, dogs, drinking water and food for the trip. They knew what they were doing, yeah? And given that they were going against the prevailing winds and ocean currents, it took a lot of knowledge of seamanship and navigation and a fair amount of magic just to make it.

“So they got into their fancy canoes and they filled them with chickens and taro root and sweet potatoes and all the other food staples of the Polynesian peoples and launched themselves onto the open ocean. With the people went the *kahunas*, the mages who used spirits and magic to make the journey a little faster and easier. Still, can you imagine giving up the only island you’d ever known to go look for another that might be 10, a hundred or a thousand miles away? In a canoe?

“From Tonga and Samoa they colonized Te Henua Enata around 300 CE. A couple of centuries later another wave of colonization took the Polynesians north to Hawaii and southeast to Rapa Nui. The last portion of the Polynesian diaspora took the Polynesians to Rarotonga and Tahiti and environs around 600, and to Ao Te Aroa, my island, around 800.”

“Ao Te Aroa is New Zealand, right?”

“Yup. A lot of the islands are known by other, European names these days, but I refuse to use them because they leave a bitter taste in my mouth.

“Once the Polynesians settled Ao Te Aroa, they were the most widely spread people on the face of the planet, effectively controlling an area roughly twice the size of the continental United States.”

“How do you know all this stuff?”

“Well, I’ve been around for a long time and I’ve kept my eyes open the whole time, for one thing, yeah? And when I’m not running around making magic and saving the asses of mages who’ve gotten themselves in trouble I’m a professor of Polynesian culture at the University of Auckland. Nifty, huh?”

“Wow.”

“It makes for an interesting life, I’ll give it that. And since I’m the professor, here’s your first question: What’s the difference between a *kahuna*, a *tuhuna* and a *tohunga*?”

“I don’t know what any of them are, so I have no idea what the difference is between them.”

“Okay, fair enough. They’re all three different words for the same thing. A *kahuna* is a Hawaiian mage, a *tuhuna* is a mage from Te Henua Enata, and a *tohunga* is what I am, a mage from Ao Te Aroa. But it’s all the same thing. The words just shifted linguistically a little between islands, that’s all. We all practice *huna*, a very loose catch-all phrase for Polynesian magic.”



"Is there more than one word for the *un*Awakened? Because if there are, and if it's important, I'm going to have to start writing this stuff down."

"No, don't worry about it. There are different words, I suppose from the different islands, but most of the mages I know just call them *makaainani*. That basically means 'commoners.'"

HAWAIKI (WESTERN POLYNESIA)

Polynesians from most of the islands speak of a homeland to the west that they call Hawaiki. It takes on kind of a legendary sheen in a lot of the stories that get told about it — the great original homeland of the Polynesians — but it basically all refers to the same place: western Polynesia, which comprises Tonga and the Samoas.

While Hawaiki may have a certain panache among Polynesians, the realities of the situation — as far as practitioners of *huna* are concerned, anyway — are kind of pathetic. The earliest Polynesians, those of Tonga and Samoa, didn't have much skill with magic at all. They made do with a little Correspondence to get where they were going and a few minor agreements with spirits to help them out once they got there. That was pretty much it. And that was back in the so-called "good old days." Life in Tonga and Samoa must have been too comfortable, or something, because they never got much beyond that rudimentary level of magic.

The last 200 years have further devastated Hawaiki, making it a shadow even of its pathetic former self, and that's pretty sad, because even at its mystical and cultural height it never was the great and shining homeland that the legends made it out to be.

TONGA

The initial colonization of Tonga took place about 3000 years ago. Back then they were real hell-raisers. They initiated the long, violent history of warring *kahunas* a long, long time ago, although from what I've come to understand, their magic was pretty lame and not particularly frightening. You're probably a better mage than most of those early Tongans, and you're only, what, 25? They spent so much time fighting, though, that they just didn't have time to learn the principles of magic in any depth. The ancient Tongans get a lot of comparisons to the Vikings. War, to them, was a noble and edifying pastime, while peace was a boring state best left to women and children. As they expanded out from island to island, they spread their violent approach to the world. At their peak, the Tongans had extended their island empire so far as to include Niue, Tokelau, Samoa and parts of Fiji. It was an impressive feat, particularly given their weak comprehension of *huna*. Still, I think they squandered so much energy back then, and had so many of their greatest warriors killed off that, over time, they lost a lot of their drive. There was a time when they were fierce warriors, but over time all of their movers and shakers either colonized other parts of Polynesia or got themselves killed.

For centuries, the Tu'i Kanokupolu, a kind of high chief, was the ruler of the Tongans, and he led raids on other islands and had a swarm of wives and got all kinds of other advantages, but the power of Tonga started waning as soon as all the hot blooded youngsters went off to colonize Te Enua Enata. After a while it was pointless to be the Tu'i Kanokupolu because Tonga had lost all its vigor and drive, but I'll get to that in a second.

Modern Tongans confuse me. On one hand, they claim to be aggressively independent, and they can prove it, because they're the last island monarchy in Polynesia. In all of Polynesia, they're the only ones who refused to become a colony for Europe. That's a big deal. On the other hand, they still did everything they could to foreswear their Polynesian heritage in favor of a European model. That goes double for anything involving religion, yeah? Once the missionaries went to work on them, they tossed out the old ways in under a generation.

"Given the weakness of their *kahunas*, it makes more sense, I guess. Tonga still has a small handful of old *kahunas* living on some of its more remote islands, but they're mostly navigators using Hedge Magic. So far as I can tell — and I could be wrong, because I don't spend much time in Hawaiki these days — Tonga has only one fully Awakened mage, Salote Fua, and not only is he a cranky old bastard, but he can't seem to do much magic beyond the occasional simple apprentice's rote. Pathetic, yeah?

SAMOA

That said, Tonga still has the advantage over Samoa. Only Rapa Nui is more pathetic as the Polynesian world goes. Missionaries did a real number on Samoa. More than any other Polynesian people, the Samoans have turned their backs on their heritage and become Bible thumpers. And poverty-stricken Bible thumpers at that. It's like a fuckin' trailer park in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, yeah? Not to mention they all reek of rancid coconut milk. It's disgusting.

"Two missionaries in particular, the aptly named Charles Barff and his brother-in-dogma John Williams came onto the island around 1830 and went berserk with the conversions. They got hundreds and hundreds of Samoans to swear off the old religion, but they weren't quite as effective as they needed to be, poor guys. The pious Reverend Williams wound up as the main course in a good old-fashioned Tongan barbecue, and not a minute too soon, I say. Unfortunately, the damage was done and, like heads on a hydra, more missionaries came pouring in to take his place — pushy, self-righteous bastards — and in time they had their way with the entire population of Samoa, all however many islands of it. It's now known as the Bible belt of the Pacific, and it has no, no practitioners of *huna*. The irony here is that I think a cluster of — what do they call them? — Celestial Choristers has taken up residence on Pago Pago, and that's it for Samoa's Awakened population.

"Okay, I don't want to talk about Hawaiki any more. It depresses me. Let's get to the good stuff."

EASTERN POLYNESIA

TE HENUA ENATA (MARQUESAS)

"You've heard of Marquesas, right?" asked Mo.

Mutt stopped to think about it for a moment. "Yeah, but I don't know why."

"There was a show on the television a few years ago called Survivor, yeah? They filmed it there."

"I was studying with our medicine man right around then," said Mutt, "so I never saw it, but my sister talked about it a lot."

"The rightful Polynesian name is Te Henua Enata, which means 'The Land of Man.' This is where we can start talking about the *real tuhunas*. Te Henua Enata is the central jewel in the crown of Polynesian magic. When the early Polynesians came east from Hawaiki, it was Te Henua Enata that they found and colonized back in 300 CE.

"Technically, Te Henua Enata comprises two archipelagos, the north islands of Nuku Hiva (the modern capitol), Ua Pou, and Ua Huka; and the southern islands of Hiva Oa, Tahuata and Fatu Hiva. There are some other little islets that poke up here and there along the archipelagos; they're rarely inhabited, so they're good places for doing long rituals that you don't want anyone finding you performing — just don't do anything that causes the ocean to get mad, because they're not far enough above sea level to provide you with much protection. The people and cultures of both archipelagos are the same, so they're appropriately lumped together."

"Te Henua Enata is where tattoos were first invested with spiritual and magical abilities and where the *tuhunas* started using tikis for more than just boosting fertility. There was a flowering of interest in magic beyond the simple shortcut techniques necessary to get them from A to B. As far as I'm concerned, and I've studied this stuff for a long time, Te Henua Enata is the real birthplace of *huna*, the Polynesian magical tradition. It was also one of the most savage, barbaric and out of control places on the planet at the time."

"And their diet included at least one item that you don't see much of these days."

Long Pig

"You know what long pig is, yeah?" asked Mo, a chuckle in his voice.

"No."

"It's a kind of meat. If you're ever offered any, I think you may want to decline."

"What is it?"

"It's what they call human meat."

Mutt hesitated a moment before answering, "I think you're bullshitting me."

"No, I'm not, actually. The meat of the human animal tastes vaguely like pork, and when it's skinned and roasting on a spit, it looks vaguely like a long, skinny pig. Depending on who you talk to, the tastiest bits are either the big, smooth muscle at the base of the thumb or the little muscles in the face."

"So was that sort of thing... common?" asked Mutt.

"Well," began Mo, "let me put it this way: There's a theme of cannibalism running throughout the history of Polynesia that's impossible to deny. Overpopulation makes people more expendable, and the islands had a long history of overpopulation — still do — thanks to the habitual use of fertility tikis. Consequently, cannibalism and human sacrifice were both relatively common there. The prevalence of cannibalism varied a lot from archipelago to archipelago. It was pretty rare in Tahiti, for example, but rampant throughout Te Henua Enata. Not infrequently, when the Polynesians first met the early European explorers, they'd crouch down beside them and squeeze their legs and pinch their butts as a means of simultaneously insulting the pale newcomers and assessing how substantial they might be to eat. One of the big cases that got a lot of coverage in Europe involved a woman named Anne Butchers, the girlfriend of the captain of a ship called the Cumberland. They landed on Rarotonga in 1813 and they were hoping to convert some of the natives. Alas, she got all uppity with an old and revered *tuhuna* and literally threw a Bible at him, so the inhabitants of Rarotonga killed

TRAFFIC IN HEADS

"For a while in the 18th century, European museums, Hermetic mages and collectors of oddities developed a strange fascination with the dried *mokoed* heads from Ao Te Aroa. A few sailors brought one or two of the things back and all of a sudden everybody had to have one just to show how fabulously worldly they were, yeah? They must have been powerfully drawn to the sheer exoticism or something, because they traded vast quantities of goods, including guns and ammunition, to the Maori people for them. The demand outstripped the supply pretty fast, yeah? But it was so lucrative that Maori chiefs started killing their own slaves, applying *te-moko* to their heads posthumously and then selling them to the Europeans as the heads of powerful old chiefs."

"One Major-General Robley wrote a book about it in 1896 called *Traffic in Heads*. The practice went on for years until I think some law was introduced to stop the import of body parts, or maybe imported tattooed heads just stopped being fashionable among the European aristocracy. In any case, Europeans may have called the Maori savages, but they had quite a culture of headhunting of their own, yeah? Over the course of a few decades, thousands of heads were shipped from Ao Te Aroa to England and other European countries. Enough Maori slaves were killed to make a significant dent in the population, and that was at a time when the population was already dropping due to exposure to the filthy *pakaha*'s diseases. What I want to know is where all those *mokoed* heads are now and to what use they're being put. I know they didn't all wind up in museums...."



and ate her. Her bones — at least the ones they think are hers — are buried on a smaller island called Muri. It's been almost 200 years and the Europeans — those that know about it, anyway — are *still* talking about that little incident. I guess they didn't notice the welcome sign hanging from the palm trees: Now entering Polynesia. Welcome to the food chain.

"All the Polynesians practiced cannibalism, especially atoll islanders. Many of the Polynesian Islands, especially Te Henua Enata and Rapa Nui had quite a history of cannibalism, though for different reasons.

"In Rapa Nui, food became scarce toward the end, and cannibalism was a means of eking out the sparse supplies.

"In Te Henua Enata, however, where intertribal warfare got particularly nasty, cannibalism was a cruel tactic with which to bedevil your enemies while simultaneously appeasing the gods. Any offering to the gods was called *ika*, which means fish, and anyone from an opposing tribe could be used as *ika*. Once caught, they would be hung upside down by hooks. When they were needed, they'd be brought down and taken to the execution blocks where the *mu*, the ritual assistant, would bash their brains out with a giant ironwood club.

"The cannibalism of different individuals was performed for different reasons. When women and children were eaten, it

seems to have been just for food, unless they were *kahunas*, in which case their skulls were considered particularly precious. *Kahunas* and warriors killed in battle were eaten to absorb their power. Throughout Polynesia, the head was thought to be the pooling place for mana, spiritual power, Quintessence, what have you, and tattooed heads even more so, so the skulls of the vanquished were kept for that reason. The more skulls or heads you had, the more power you had to draw on. In Ao Te Aroa, *kahunas* would create whole Quintessence batteries made of dried *mokoed* heads; they're called *mokomai*.

"But, yeah, to get back to the topic at hand, cannibalism was a big deal in the South Seas. Throughout Polynesia, there was no worse insult than to eat a member of your enemy's family. The popular bragging protocol afterwards was to loudly announce to your enemy that you were picking his son, daughter, wife or whatever from between your teeth. Of course, that kind of blatant behavior just begged for retribution, so six months later, it would be the opponent who would be picking his teeth. *Kahunas* in particular were notorious for those kinds of high jinks. It takes a lot of understanding to perform magic; it's a shame it doesn't require a little tact or couth as well."

"So, have you ever eaten anybody?" Mutt teased, smiling.

"We're not talking about me right now," said Mo. "We're talking about the history of Polynesia. I'm trying to tell you something about the place you're going. You might want to pay attention."

"Before the *pakahas*, the Europeans, showed up, the population of Te Henua Enata lingered right around 50,000, and the perfect climate allowed the people a lot of spare time to get into trouble, so they were constantly fighting, cannibalizing one another, getting extensive tattoos and delving into the mysteries of *huna*. It was here that Polynesians really learned magic. Unsurprisingly, it was also here that the *kahuna* wars saw their most violent conflicts. Long before the arrival of the Europeans, there were three additional islands in between the north and south islands—Ua Vonata, Ua Poa and Orao Hiva—but all three of those islands were, over the course of the *kahuna* wars, destroyed or otherwise made to disappear. Ua Vonata was blasted off the planet by the volcano beneath it, Ua Poa sank beneath the waves over the course of a few days and Orao Hiva, which had the largest *tuhuna* population in all of Polynesia, just disappeared one night and nobody has any idea what happened to it. It wouldn't surprise me if it had been turned into a Horizon Realm of some sort, frankly, but that's just speculation on my part. I think that, in part, because if it *had* been destroyed, somebody would have been crowing about it.

THE KAHUNA WARS

"Yeah, let there be no doubt, between around 700 CE and 1400 CE, the various *tuhunas*, *kahunas* and *tohungas* of Polynesia ruled this part of the world and went a little crazy in pursuing their various egocentric agendas. I've spent a lot of time using various Arts to go back and experience what happened, and the degree of violent, vulgar, outrageous magic that was being tossed around was phenomenal. The Enatan *tuhunas* in particular were just crazy, man; they liked their long pig, they liked their tattoos and they loved big, violent conflict. It was a rich and tumultuous period for the South Seas mages, and probably not one that most folks would really want to bring back, to be perfectly honest.

"Te Henua Enata is where everything kicked off. A couple of *tuhunas* got into a squabble over who was more qualified to perform a *tatu* ritual for the chief's son, and they began fighting with magic. It wasn't long before the chief told them to take their magical duel away from where bystanders could get hurt, so they took their battle out onto the open ocean. It was crazy, it was violent, it was *huge*, but one of them finally submitted, amazingly enough, without dying. That was the only time that happened; most wars between *kahunas* went on for decades and ended only when one or the other met a messy end. Both of them developed a taste for large-scale magical combat after that, however, and they both started fights with other mages not long after. It was only a year or so before *tuhunas* and *kahunas* were tossing tsunamis, lava and thunderbolts at each other with a certain regularity.

"I sometimes wonder if that last wave of Polynesian colonization might have been driven by people wanting to get away from the main battleground of the *kahunas*.

"The big fights took place around Te Henua Enata and the Hawaiian Islands, but Tahiti, Rapa Nui and Ao Te Aroa occasionally got drawn in.

"Do you ever get the feeling that you were born too late? Every time I think about *kahuna* wars, I do.

"Even to this day, the natives of Te Henua Enata remain among the least Europeanized of all the Polynesians. There are Christian churches, but organized religion has yet to really be accepted here the way it has in other places, and it *damn sure* hasn't been sucked up the way it was in Samoa. And the *tuhunas* of Te Henua Enata are still among the finest in Polynesia. It was here that the tiki first became the widespread staple of Polynesian magic that it is. The Enatan artisans are superb—almost as good as those of Ao Te Aroa.

FATU HIVA

"The *tuhunas* of Te Henua Enata are scattered throughout all of the islands, but there's actually a cluster of them on Fatu Hiva. And, better yet, they're not at each other's throats, although they got a little riled up in the late '80s. If you want powerful tikis, kid, Fatu Hiva's the place to go, but you might have to work to get there. Not only does the island not have a landing strip, but it's not easily accessed by boat, so the banal modern world hasn't done a very good job of moving in on the territory yet. Frankly, given the shrewdness shown by the Enatans and the utter backwater nature of the island, I wonder if it's even a blip on the Tech boys' screen.

"*Huna*'s not the only old tradition they practice, though, if you know what I mean, so if you wind up on Fatu Hiva and somebody starts looking at you a little hungry, you might want to leave, yeah? No sense in losing your head while on vacation."

Mo laughed and Mutt followed his lead, but inwardly Mutt was starting to think that Mo was much too fascinated by cannibalism for his comfort. He channeled his nervousness into paddling. When he looked down at the moonlit water, it astonished him to see how fast the canoe was going.

HAWAII

"After Te Henua Enata, though, Hawaii is definitely the liveliest of the Polynesian islands—from a magical perspective, anyway.

"The Hawaiian archipelago originally comprised nine big, wild and powerful islands, one of which, Molokini, was essentially lost in the *kahuna* wars, although you can still see the very tip of it sticking up out of the water. To this day Hawaii remains one of the main movers and shakers in the Polynesian world. After the Enatans, the Hawaiian *kahunas* were probably the most skilled and enlightened in Polynesia. The magic of the ocean, spirits and war were their specialty. Hawaiian *kahunas* did not pull their punches. They're the

ones who came up with a bunch of the nastier war magic — guided fireballs, death prayers and the like.

“The islands held a lot of people, and a lot of them studied *huna* to one degree or another. At its peak, Hawaii’s population was around 500,000.

“And it all crumbled in the face of contact with the filthy Europeans, who introduced, as a matter of course, measles, influenza, tuberculosis, dysentery, smallpox, typhus, typhoid and worse.

“All of the Polynesian islands pretty much follow a similar pattern, and if you remember nothing else from this trip, let this stick in your head: The islands were violent places where *kahunas* held a lot of sway, probably too much sway. Life may not always have been stable, but it was good, and family and tribe were the focal point of life. When the Europeans showed up, they brought diseases with them that decimated the population of every island they landed on. Polynesian women didn’t have the same uptight Christian approach to sex as their European counterparts, so they were willing partners for the sailors on the ships, who infected them with syphilis and gonorrhea for their kindness. The population implosion energized the islanders, and made them relatively pliable for the pushy, tyrannical missionaries who vilified their priests and reviled their sacred traditions. Missionaries shot *kahunas*, burned tikis, razed temples, banned tattooing and forced their lame-ass, white-man’s religion on the dispirited Polynesians, leaving a once proud people a shadow of its former self.”

Mutt could not see the look on Mo’s face, but he could hear the anger in his voice.

“But,” continued Mo, “you’re an American Indian, so I’m not telling you anything about the sneaky, land-greedy Europeans that you didn’t already know.

“The population collapse robbed the Polynesian mages of their followers and the arrival of the Europeans fundamentally altered the mindset of the people, which interfered with the performance of magic. The *kahunas* were far better at war magic than healing magic, unfortunately. They could make volcanoes erupt, raise or sink whole islands, but nothing in their repertoire — most of them, anyway — could cure these strange and lethal new diseases.

“Within a hundred years of the first European contact, Hawaii’s population had literally been decimated. At the turn of the 20th century there were only around 45,000 native Hawaiians left on the entire Hawaiian archipelago.

“And, again, the missionaries pulled no punches at turning the people against the *kahunas* and their old magical ways. Christianity spread almost as fast as the syphilis the Europeans brought with them. Maybe the Hawaiians had grown tired of the constant wars of the *kahunas* by then and were fed up with being bystanders and sacrifices as the *kahunas* got in their vast, violent squabbles.

“Once the direction things were going became clear, the local mages started taking action. The *kahunas* sank several European ships — the Lassiter, the Vandergroot, the White

Rook. They all met their ends by magical means, but it was too little, too late. The *kahunas* sacrificed a number of Europeans — overly intrepid sailors and missionaries for the most part — and made a little headway, but, again, it was too little, too late. Once word reached Europe of the exotic tattooed heathens of the South Seas, there was no stopping the influx of the curious, the greedy and the obsessed. The Europeans kept coming and as they came, the paradigm ossified, smacking the *kahunas* with Paradox. Since those feisty Polynesian mages were used to making things happen on a big scale, the scale of their Paradox was devastating as well. More *kahunas* fell before Paradox than fell before the direct actions of Technocrats. Mind you, compared to what we think of as Paradox today, it was nothing, but even then lifting islands out of the ocean and dropping them on the heads of your enemies was vulgar as hell, yeah?

“One of the most notorious Void Seekers was Captain James Cook, defiler of Polynesia. Cook was an accomplished explorer and diehard Technocrat, but he met his match at the hands of a couple of Hawaiian *kahunas* — Pokualani, ‘the Witch of Molokai’; and Kaleokaluhiva, “the Soul-Claimer,” in 1779. Europeans made a big deal out of his ‘tragic, untimely’ death, but from a Polynesian standpoint, the only sad thing about Cook’s death is that it was so long in coming. On the bright side, he was such a scourge to the Polynesians that he actually succeeded at the impossible: He got two *kahunas*, bitter rivals at that, to work together to take him out.”

“Damn,” said Mutt, “You sound really bitter toward this Cook guy.”

“You’re right. I am,” said the tattooed *tohunga*, “but I have good reason. He and his men killed the first *tohunga* I studied *huna* with in Ao Te Aroa.”

“Now you are bullshitting me. That had to have been...” It took a second for Mutt to put two and two together, but when it dawned on him, he just said “Oh,” and fell silent. It suddenly made sense to him why Mo knew so much.

“For a while in Hawaii there was a group of *kahunas*, and sort of still is, I guess, who tried to be like close neighbors or family, yeah? They called themselves the Kopa Loei, but it didn’t work out all that well for a number of reasons. Foremost, *kahunas*, by their very nature, are better suited to talking to gods and spirits than to each other. There’s something in the *kahuna* ego that doesn’t want to be upstaged, yeah? So a bunch of Hawaiian *kahunas* started trading notes and seeing what might come of joint cooperation and they got results, but not good ones. Last I heard, they called too much attention to themselves and buckled under the pressure of a new crusade by the Tupua Nui, what they called the Technocracy. The year 2000 was a bad year to be a *kahuna* in Hawai’i. A few of them, the more obvious ones, the ones who can’t tone down their volcanic tempers, were hunted down. It scared a lot of people. Most of them just dropped out of the Kopa Loei movement and still practice their magic as a quiet, personal thing. Some of them just moved to another island, where the Technocracy wasn’t so aggressive. And, lastly,

those strangely pro-social *kahunas* who couldn't part with the idea of working in tandem with others, forged an alliance of sorts with formal Tradition mages — your tradition, the Dreamspeakers. You can still find a lot of them here, and they still call themselves the Kopa Loei, but if you fall for the line that they represent all Polynesian *kahunas*, *tuhunas* and *tohungas*, you're in for a rude awakening when you start dealing with some of those old badass *tuhunas* on Enata.

"On the bright side, the Hawaiians have recovered pretty well. Their islands are still used as getaways and tourist traps by *haoles*, but they've also done a pretty good job of declaring large chunks of the islands, officially or unofficially, off-limits to whites. Wander onto the wrong road on the wrong island and even today you can *still* wind up as a sacrifice to Pele. Great people, the Hawaiians. You gotta love that kind of spirit, yeah?"

RAROTONGA (COOK ISLANDS)

"You remember when I was telling you about Tonga that they had some pretty good Correspondence magic, yeah? Well it was Rarotonga that took that and ran with it. Rarotonga has the best seafarers and more Correspondence Masters than any other island in Polynesia.

"The two big islands on this archipelago are Rarotonga and Rakahanga, but there are 15 islands total, six of which are atolls. You got that?"

Mutt sighed. "I guess so. If I'd known this was going to be a geography lesson, I would have brought pen and paper. What is an atoll, anyway?"

Volcanic Islands, Atolls and Coral Islands

"Ah," said Mo, "I'm glad you asked. So, you have three kinds of things that stick up out of the ocean, yeah? Volcanic islands, atolls and coral islands. You know what a volcanic island is. An atoll is formed when coral forms in a ring around the underwater slopes of a volcanic island and grows around the island even after the volcanic island itself has eroded away. A coral island is what happens when the coral fills in the ring of an atoll and becomes a solid mass. A lot of times islands will just sink under the waves due to earthquakes or subsidence in the ocean floor, yeah? But as long as the coral can get sunlight, it can keep growing and create islands on its own. And while coral doesn't grow quickly, it generally grows more quickly than the sea floor subsides."

"Coral islands also happen from time to time when *tohungas* need an island to call their own. They appeal to the coral spirits, or just make the coral grow and *boom*, instant island. Nothing really grows on these islands, because there's no soil, but, hey, if you just need a place to park your sanctum, it works fine. Better yet, there's no volcano to worry about and if the oceans start to rise or an earthquake lowers the sea floor, you just make more island."

TAHITI (SOCIETY ISLANDS)

"Tahiti is just the largest of the nine islands on the archipelago; the other well-known island in the chain is Bora Bora.

"Tahiti suffered the same indignities as the other islands, but it was pretty low-key before the Europeans showed up and it

remains so to the present day. The Tahitians never were quite as out of control as residents of Hawaii or Te Henua Enata. Cannibalism was never big there and the *kahunas* were always a little more focused on keeping their islands in balance — by staying in harmony with spirits and keeping the mana flowing well — than in kicking each other's asses. A lot of the Tahitian *kahunas* joined in with the Dreamspeakers even before the Kopa Loeidid, and I think Tahiti is still a popular place for Dreamspeakers to go to learn about a different approach to shamanism. That's kind of where I expect you to wind up, frankly."

"France upset a lot of the Tahitian *kahunas* by detonating nuclear weapons on the atolls of Moruroa and Fangataufa. I'm not sure what the point of that was. Were they acting on their own, or were they pawns? Were they threatening the *kahunas*? Wiping out a powerful Node? Getting rid of some potent enemy? I'm still not sure. The upshot, though, was that the people of French Polynesia were pissed off. It struck a nerve and reinvigorated the drive for independence from France, which is a good thing as far as I'm concerned."

"The locals are now making the return to traditional Polynesian culture a priority, and the *kahunas* are clearly benefiting from that: tikis and tattoos have gone from being banned to being all the rage, and while it's not a lot, it's more to work with than they had a century ago."

TOKELAU

"Located vaguely between Samoa and Ao Te Aroa, Tokelau is three large atolls and a bunch of islands, around 120 of them, loosely affiliated by language and culture. Like Samoa, Tokelau has been infested with Christians, but outside of the religious aspects of life, Tokelau is about as purely Polynesian as you can get, and, believe me, the farther from the main islands you get, the less Christian the populace becomes. On the tiny islands on the outskirts of Tokelau, some no bigger than football fields, the old Polynesian ways are still observed, and there are a few wily old *kahunas* practicing magic on their island sancta, undisturbed by the pious sheep of the main islands — and a lot of the magic they practice is pretty dark."

"Outside of that, there's not a lot to say about Tokelau. It gets no tourists, has no airport, no harbor, no cars, no guns and no interest in joining the modern world. Its population is minuscule and it doesn't offer enough for the rest of the world to swoop in and get a better grip."

"If I were looking for a place to lay low, I'd probably head there. Or, better yet, to Tuvalu, but Tuvalu is just a little too far off the beaten path. I'd die of boredom. If that's where we have to take you to get you to safety, though, we will. Take a book and have some means of purifying your water, because running water is just a myth here."

"If you do make it to Tokelau, though, I wouldn't go looking for the other mages if I were you."

Spirits of the Oceanic Voids

"This pabulum that tourism companies are trying to sell you, this image of Polynesia as a little bit of paradise, is

bullshit, yeah? In a mundane vein, overcrowding, poverty, radiation poisoning, rising seas, soulless culture-pandering and lockstep conformity are all specters that underlie the lives of modern Polynesians. Spiritually, however, there are some old Polynesian gods and *taniwhas* — “demons” —slumbering in the water between islands (or on sunken islands) whom we would be better off not waking up. Oddly enough, their worshippers seem to be fond of Tokelau.

“A few of the tikis around the islands really are idols, unfortunately, and most of them are to these darker spirits — Toru, the god of the chasms of the deep ocean; the *tipua*, the demons that can assume any shape at will; Ratu-Mai-M’bula, the snake devil who devours islands from their roots up; Honoyeta, the plague-god; Miru, the demon-goddess who makes men drunk and then consumes them; Kahoali, the god who rewards human sacrifice; Auraka, the all-devouring; Kukulau, the goddess of lies, her sister Arohirohi, the goddess of mirages (and the bane of navigators). So if you find a strange tiki and you’re not sure what it is, unless you’re really good at identifying such things, I’d say don’t touch it. Especially if you’re around Tokelau.



“And don’t think that the Nephandi aren’t just as present in Polynesia as they are in the rest of the world. Those gods I just mentioned? Some of them have Nephantic cults devoted to their return, and more than a few Sunday Christians on Tokelau and Tonga have been known to go to some of the old places on the islands late at night and pay homage to other, less human, gods.

“But let’s change the subject. It’s time to talk about my home island.

AΩ TE AROΩA (NEW ZEALAND)

“Ao Te Aroa means ‘Land of the Long White Cloud.’ Beautiful, yeah?

I love it. I’m not crazy about what the Europeans have done with it, but, frankly, it could have been much worse.

“Ao Te Aroa comprises two big islands, the north island, with its live volcano, and the south island. Ao Te Aroa is ancient, but full of mana still, and of all the Polynesian Islands, it was settled the most recently. Volcanism keeps the mountains high and the land young. The crust hasn’t even fully cooled and you can see the geysers and soak in the hot springs if you like. Ao Te Aroa was part of Gondwanaland millions of years ago, and it’s been around since then. The first Maori people only settled there about 800 years ago, and we’ve been

careful with the mana. There are many, many Nodes left in Ao Te Aroa that haven't been touched yet by the *pakehas* (that means foreigners, not unlike the Hawaiian term *haole*).

"The people are just as primal. The first attempted landing by *pakehas* was made in 1642 by Abel Tasman, the guy Tasmania is named after. He tried to land, but the Maori natives caught and ate several members of his crew, convincing him to beat a hasty retreat. Go us, yeah?

"It didn't last, though, and the damned Brits started settling in like we'd invited them. Our *tohungas* caught them by surprise by using magic, which resulted in their calling in the Technocracy and things just got ugly. Suffice it to say that a lot of blood was shed on both sides.

"We were losing ground until the mid-'70s, but Maori tribes are pretty tightly connected and we've learned some good techniques for dealing with the damned *pakehas* — threatening to blow up the New Zealand parliament, for one.

"So these days, Ao Te Aroa is one of the few places where the native people are actually making headway."

Mutt was trying to remember all the facts that Mo was presenting him with. "But what about your magical history? What about the culture and legends? Is it surviving all this warfare or are you just becoming like the people you're fighting?"

"You want legends and myths? We have lots of them, and they're being taught in the schools. Our language is an official language of New Zealand, too. You like stories? How about a Maui story, yeah? Maui is the epitome of the Polynesian hero; his stories are told from Samoa to Hawaii — where they named a whole island after him — to Ao Te Aroa. This is the story of how Maui died. One day, the great fisherman Maui decided to overcome death for all the human race, so he found Hine-nui-to-po, the Great Woman of the Night. She was a death goddess, yeah? Somehow he got the idea that if he were able to crawl back into the womb of the death goddess, that he would conquer death. So he waited until she was sleeping, transformed himself into a lizard, and crawled up between her legs and inside her. He was almost to her womb when she woke up. She clenched her muscles and crushed him to death, and Maui's long career of heroics came to a bizarre end, and that's why humans die now. How's that? You like that? I got a million of them, yeah?"

"Hey," said Mutt, "Isn't that an island up there?"

"Yeah, I know, we're almost there, but there's one other key island that I should mention, if only to give you the opportunity to learn from their abundant mistakes.

KAPITI ISLAND

"My people, the Maori, are lucky to have in their keeping one of the most powerful Nodes in the southern hemisphere. It's off the coast of Ao Te Aroa, but not too far, and it is one of the few success stories in the conflict against modern banality and the desecration of sacred places. That place is called Kapiti Island.

"Shortly after settling the mainland of Ao Te Aroa, Kapiti was settled by two Maori tribes, the Muaupoko and the Ngati kahungunu who cared for the Node and even shared it occasion-

ally with shapechangers, notably lizard-changers and occasionally even Rokea or wolf-changers down from Australia.

"Everything was fine, more or less, until the early 19th century, when everybody just started getting a little out of control. Both tribes, which had been getting along for nigh on 700 years, started fighting, the lizard changers went missing, the wolf changers stopped coming down from Australia entirely, and all the magic done on Kapiti started to get tinged with a resonance that I can only describe as weird or unwholesome.

"For a while things got ugly. Whalers set up bases there for a while, and later the Node had to be hidden from the Europeans who started clearing the island for, of all things, farming. A good three quarters of the island was cleared, but a number of *tohungas* got together and did some nasty tricks with moving the mana of the island around and preventing their crops from growing.

"We thought we were in the clear when they decided to give up farming. But then they decided that if it wasn't good for farming, it must be good for trapping, but there weren't any animals worth trapping, so they introduced Australian bush-tailed possums to the island, and they took to the place like they owned it. The energy got worse.

"The *tohungas* decided to take matters into their own hands, and through the judicious use of dream magic and sorcerous tikis, we convinced the political powers that be to make the island a nature preserve.

"It gets better: In 1949, a law was passed requiring a permit to set foot on Kapiti. In 1975, the Maori people started working very effectively at gaining more control over our native lands, and we've made a lot of progress. The Technocracy has been trying to get at the Node on Kapiti for over a century now, but the Maori people have established enormous legal roadblocks for them and the *tohungas* have warded the Node very effectively with some potent tikis.

"And since about 1999, when everything else in the world went haywire, the energy of the island has finally straightened out. I'm not sure what that means, but it's made tending the island easier, and we've even seen some of the lizard-changers on the island again.

"If you ask me, that just goes to show what can happen if you put yourself in the hands of a few good Maori *tohungas*!

THE TRAGEDY OF RAPA NUI (EASTER ISLAND)

"I don't even like talking about it, but one of the cultural jewels in the Polynesian chain, the island where magic was most a part of the culture, the island where mages were the most influential in the culture at large, collapsed under the weight of its own warring *kahunas*. The story is more about the pathetic egos of a few idiot mages than anything else — that and the toll taken by that kind of egoism on everyone involved.

"Never heard of Rapa Nui? You have, you just don't know it. The island has taken on a lot of other names in its time. You probably know it as Easter Island, although its

proper name these days, according to Chile, the country that claims sovereignty over it, is the Isla de Pascua.

“Now, bear in mind that Rapa Nui is over a thousand miles away from the next piece of habitable island and 2000 miles away from the nearest mainland, which is Chile. A number of canoes set sail from central Polynesia, mostly Hawaii and Te Henua Enata; again, I think they were trying to escape the *kahuna* wars. When the Polynesians landed, they discovered that the climate wasn’t nearly as nurturing as that of most of Polynesia. Of all the crops that had fed the Polynesians throughout their island hopping, only one, the sweet potato, would grow on Rapa Nui, probably because the sweet potato was native to South America. So they started off compromised.

“Of course, they had their fertility tikis with them, so the island population grew by leaps and bounds. The island reached its population peak of 10,000 or so right around 1550, not long before the Europeans showed up. But back then, their *kahunas* were a big deal. They promised to protect the people from the “bad *kahunas*” they had just escaped, and the people, in turn, promised to serve the *kahunas*, and the secrets of magic were handed down very carefully based on reasons that had more to do with politics than magical talent or enlightenment.

“The *makaainani*, or commoners, followed their favorite *kahunas* like modern sports enthusiasts follow their favorite football or cricket players. Only unlike modern days, back then they served their *kahunas* like groupies, not because they were forced to, but because they wanted to please the *kahunas*. They saw where the power was and they wanted to side with the most powerful *kahuna*. For their part, the *kahunas* were invested in creating the biggest spectacle, the biggest demonstration of their magical abilities to impress their followers.

“And it worked. The *kahunas* were the monarchs of Rapa Nui, and they had quite a deal going for themselves. And not wanting to get pulled into the *kahuna* wars of Central Polynesia any more, they decided toward the island with extremely powerful tikis to keep other *kahunas* from seeing what they’d pulled off.

“The *kahunas* on Rapa Nui were obsessive specialists in enormous tikis, and they created the largest and most powerful tikis on the planet, the *moai*, to inhibit the Correspondence Effects that other mages might use to get to Rapa Nui. What they had going was, in fact, a competition to see who could create more, bigger and better tikis.

“So, the *kahunas* were tossing around vast quantities of mana, yeah? And they were making these enormous *moai*, but then they demanded that the *makaainani* take them to their stone platforms around the island. Personally, I think that the *kahunas* were just so used to tossing around magic that they didn’t give any consideration to what they were asking the commoners to do.

“But the commoners took it in stride, and they found a way to get those *moai* to their platforms: They used rollers made of logs. That part was pretty clever; it’s hard to move enormous stone monoliths, after all. The part that wasn’t clever is the fact that they used every single tree on the island as a roller. Without trees, the soil had no cover and the rich volcanic soil

got washed away into the ocean. Without trees, they couldn’t build houses. Without trees they couldn’t build canoes to go get more trees, or seeds or anything. Remember, Rapa Nui is over a thousand miles away from *anywhere*. And while that didn’t stop them when they had canoes — they made 2000 mile trips back and forth to the South American mainland, after all — there wasn’t a lot they could do without using the canoe.

“For their part, the *kahunas* proved themselves to be utterly worthless. With all the anti-Correspondence *moai* up, there was no way they could use magic to leave the island to get more trees, at least not without destroying every one of the thousand or so *moai* they’d spent the last few centuries creating. Essentially, while the Rapa Nuians were great at making tikis, getting them to do something to save themselves was a lost cause. They tried ordering — *ordering* — spirits to bring back trees or tree spirits to the island, and that only resulted in what amounts to warfare between the physical and spiritual world. The *kahunas* began performing increasingly desperate and ugly magic — human sacrifice, appeals to demons, that kind of thing — and then suddenly the *kahunas* were all gone. Vanished. The rongorongo tablets I found in the spirit world don’t give any indication of what happened to them. I’ve tried seeing for myself what happened again and again, but the *moai* put off such a powerful blocking aura that I can’t see anything. Someone more powerful than I might be able to figure out what happened, but I’ve no idea.

“Anyway, once the *kahunas* were gone, the *makaainani* were really fucked. They had no trees, their soil was so depleted it could no longer grow even sweet potatoes, they were overpopulated, and nobody alive knew magic beyond a few very minor Hedge Magic Effects. But the followers of the respective *kahunas* still wouldn’t give up serving their former masters, just in case they came back. So the followers of one mage would tip over the *moai* of their opponents. And then it was reciprocated. And then the first groups, cranky and hungry, would capture and eat someone from the opposing team. And it degenerated from there. Eventually, all the *moai* were knocked over and cannibalism brought the population down to a more manageable level.

“Things might, might have come back given a few enlightened souls and a few generations, but then the Europeans showed up with their guns and Bibles. Worse, these were Spaniards, and they were all about slaving, so they took the strongest remaining Rapa Nuians to serve as slaves on the mainland. And then the missionaries showed up and started “civilizing” the survivors. At that point there were, at most, a few hundred surviving Rapa Nuians. And, again, they were in such pathetic shape by then that they swallowed the bullshit fed to them by the missionaries and anything that hadn’t been toppled was, and anything that hadn’t been destroyed was, including the tablets that contained the one written language developed by the Polynesian people. The script was called *rongorongo*, and there are places in the world of spirits where echoes of some of the tablets can still be found, and that’s how I know as much as I do about Rapa Nui. I don’t

believe there's anyone on the island with the blood of the original Rapa Nuians flowing in their veins these days, and while it's a tragedy, I sometimes think it might just be best to forget that Polynesians ever settled the island at all.

"And that," said Mo, "is the story of Polynesia. Or as much of it as you need to know right now since we're at our destination."



In the wake of the Technocracy's seeming victory, the last organized Craft of mages in Polynesia, the Kopa Loei, opted to throw their lot in with the Dreamspeaker Tradition after holding out for centuries.

Huna (a very generic, all-encompassing term for the trans-Polynesian magical tradition) is now practiced predominantly by unaligned *kahunas*, *tuhunas* and *tohungas* (the Hawaiian, Marquesan and Maori terms for a mage, respectively) performing their Arts privately on deserted island sancta free from Technocratic sway.

These cunning mages have a colorful and violent history. The tribal nature of the Polynesian Islands led to a pronounced tendency for different tribes to clash — Tahitian against Hawaiian, Samoan against Fijian and so on. One does not live so closely with volcanoes and the primal ocean and remain unshaped by those forces.

The mages of Polynesia, with a greater ability both to travel and to fight than their unAwakened kin, clashed frequently and violently during the battles of the great *kahunas* from around the year 1100 until 1500, making frequent use of powerful battle magic and, of course, the ubiquitous tikis.

The *kahunas* and *tohungas* of Polynesia follow a system of magic that loosely corresponds to the Sphere system used by the Traditions:

- Ahi (Forces)
- Akua (Spirit)
- Atea (Correspondence)
- Hau (Life)
- Mana (Prime)
- Manawa (Time)
- Mea (Matter)
- Neoneo (Entropy)
- No'ono'o (Mind)

The followers of *Huna* have taken the mystical principles above and created some devastating (and some merely annoying) battle magics and Wonders, which we present here for the reader's edification.

"We're there already?"

"You must be a better paddler than you thought, yeah?"

"What island is it?"

"What island do you want it to be?" asked the wily old *tohunga*.

RULES

ROTES

'AHIU NALU (ROGUE WAVE)

[••• ENTROPY, •• FORCES OR ••• ENTROPY OR •• CORRESPONDENCE, •• MATTER, •• PRIME]

Battles between *kahunas* were common in the high age of Polynesian magic, and these often took place on the ocean. A common tactic in these battles was to summon a rogue wave to knock an opponent out of his boat (or off his feet, if he was standing near, in or on the water). Polynesian mages used rogue waves primarily as distractions or harrying tactics.

System: The wave summoned is three feet high plus one additional foot for each success on the Arete roll. If the target sees the wave coming, he can roll Dexterity + Dodge at a difficulty of 8 to get out of the way; if he doesn't see it, he can roll Stamina + Survival to avoid being knocked over. A wave will stun its target momentarily and knock him into the water, but little more than that. A wave six feet or higher will cause one level of bashing damage to the target.

Since the **Rogue Wave** was such a common tactic, there were several ways of creating the Effect. The mage could tamper with probability a little (with Entropy ••) and augment the resultant wave (with Forces ••), tamper with probability a lot (and forego the Forces Effect) or, in a pinch, he could actually create the water out of thin air (Matter ••, Prime ••) and shape it with Correspondence. The first two methods can only be used on the ocean or in very large lakes, but they are always coincidental. The last method can be used in any body of water, but can easily be vulgar, at the Storyteller's discretion.

AKUA KUMU HAKA (GUIDED FIREBALL)

[••• FORCES, •• PRIME, ••• SPIRIT, OPTIONAL WITH •• CORRESPONDENCE]

Hawaiian *kahunas* were known for calling flame spirits to hunt down their enemies. Those who ran afoul of a *kahuna* were often known to stay near the ocean just in case one of these terrifying creatures was sent to dispatch them.

System: The *kahuna* creates a fireball using a conjunctional Forces/Prime Effect and then calls upon a vengeful fire spirit to come inhabit the conflagration and hunt down the mage's enemies. The akua kumu haka moves very fast and can easily outrun

a human on foot; a target in a fast-moving outrigger canoe or a car, on the other hand, might be able to escape the *akua kumu haka*.

Once the fire spirit has burned its target to death, the fire fizzles and the spirit returns whence it came.

The optional Correspondence Effect is only necessary if the *akua kumu haka* is going to operate outside the *kahuna*'s line of sight.

ALA WAI (SHORT WATERS) [••• CORRESPONDENCE]

Anthropologists have no idea how Polynesian culture spread so far over the small and widely spread islands of the South Pacific. The answer is easy: They used magic.

By chanting and willing the waters to be smaller than they seemed, a *kahuna* could go five miles with every stroke of his paddle in the waves. With the aid of this rote, a competent mage can cross the Pacific in a remarkably short period of time.

System: This rote is one more version of the **Seven League Stride (Mage, page 159)**.

ANA'ANA (THE DEATH PRAYER) [••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• LIFE OR ••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• SPIRIT]

The wizard wars of Polynesia have left modern *kahunas* with a large repertoire of deadly rotes; among the most popular of these is the death prayer. The *kahuna* casts this rote in her sanctum by beating out a martial rhythm on a drum and chanting the reasons why she wants her target to die. The target, meanwhile, begins to sicken almost immediately, and has only a limited time to seek out the *kahuna* she offended.

System: If the *kahuna* is using Life magic, the target will sicken and die over the course of three days following the completion of the rote. While this rote is similar to (if slower than) Effects used by many Tradition mages (**Rip the Man Body**, et al.), it has the advantage of being coincidental, as the target simply seems to catch something horrible and die. The disease need not be anything dramatic (and suspicious) like Ebola — anthrax, pneumonia, influenza, appendicitis and systemic strep infections are all quite capable of killing a target in three days.

If the *kahuna* is using the Spirit version of this spell, Banes or disease spirits might afflict the target to death in the same time frame and in much the same way. Alternatively, the spirits could simply cause a freak accident to befall the target: He might, for instance, trip over a piece of litter and fall into traffic or the pilot light on his stove might go out, filling his apartment with gas that then explodes, or he might be pulled under the water by a riptide. In any case, spirits can be pretty creative.

HEENALU (WAVE WALKING) [•• FORCES OR •• MATTER]

Polynesian islanders are surrounded by water. It surrounds them at all times and it is, undoubtedly, among the most limiting factors in their existence. While canoes mitigate some of the water's limitations, even a novice *kahuna* can

walk across the tops of the waves without difficulty, making brief forays from shore or even traveling from island to island with relative ease.

System: Only one success is required; extra successes are best spent on duration, especially for traversing long distances. This rote is coincidental if a shallow reef or string of small atolls is nearby — onlookers will assume the mage is walking in shallow water rather than on the water itself. Otherwise, the rote is vulgar. Movement speed is normal for both walking and running, as if the mage were walking on grass. If complex actions — such as combat — are performed soon after casting, the Storyteller may require a Stamina + Athletics roll to avoid seasickness; losing the roll causes nausea and a -2 penalty to all dice pools until the character can get to stable ground.

KAUMAHA (SACRIFICE) [••• PRIME, •• SPIRIT]

Sacrifice plays a key role in Hawaiian magic. Placating spirits through one means or another is a common theme throughout the history and mythology of Polynesia. The sacrifice of living beings to volcanoes was not common, but neither was it unheard of. By performing the proper rituals and tossing a living creature into the lava of a volcano (the volcano is the focus for the rote), the *kahuna* is able to harvest the escaping mana freed by the death. While this has many drawbacks, there are times when a *kahuna* is willing to risk almost anything for extra fuel for his magical work.

System: The *kahuna* throws his sacrifice into the volcano and uses Spirit to catch the departing ghost and Prime to reap its Quintessence. A chicken will yield a point or two, a goat or a pig up to five and a human being will yield a full 10 points of Quintessence. Certain other creatures (Rokea, old vampires) may provide even more Quintessence, and if they were preying on the *kahuna*'s people, he doesn't even have to worry about the spiritual backlash.

Giving thanks to the spirits of the non-sentient animals is generally enough to keep a mage safe from the potentially negative effects of sacrificing a living being for power, but in the case of human beings, however, things get much more complex.

If, and only if, the sacrifice is giving up his life freely and of his own will — a relatively rare circumstance — the mage suffers no repercussions. That said, if the *kahuna*'s work benefits many people, some trusting soul approaching the end of his life might volunteer to be the *kahuna*'s sacrifice.

Performing this kind of magic can easily result in the *kahuna*'s accrual of Jhor, and those who practice it often are likely to develop a profoundly Entropic Resonance.

KUΩHA (THE PASSION PRAYER) [••• CORRESPONDENCE, •• LIFE, •• MIND]

Wearing only leis of the most fragrant flowers, the *kahuna* sits (generally in his sanctum or a similar locale) and beats a primal heartbeat rhythm on his drum to incite passion in one target of his choosing.

System: Roll Arete after each full hour of drumming; this rote is, obviously, best performed as an extended action. Once the mage has accumulated a number of successes greater than the target's Willpower, the target is overcome by pure, unadulterated lust for the mage and does everything possible to be with the mage sexually. The Storyteller should roll the target's Wits + Awareness every time the mage's player rolls Arete to determine if he or she intuits what the mage is up to; if the target catches on and interrupts the passion prayer before the *kahuna* rolls enough successes, the rote is ruined.

The Effects last for one hour per success and affect the target regardless of sex or orientation. Using this rote on anyone whom one is not already sexually connected to is tantamount to rape. It's also a good way to provoke the target and his or her every friend and family member into war on the mage if used inappropriately.

ΠΑΗU (STEAM) [•• FORCES, •• PRIME]

This rote turns a large volume of water into steam, sending billowing white clouds skyward—and scalding anyone caught in the area of effect. This sudden, scalding blast is a potent (and popular) form of battle magic among the Polynesians.

System: This rote affects 100 square feet (10 x 10 and square-ish unless the player states otherwise) of the surface of the water per success. Not only does it obscure vision, effectively creating a smoke screen, but it is also a devastatingly lethal attack, inflicting standard Forces damage on anyone caught in the scalding vapors.

Some *kahunas* willing to use vulgar Effects have used this rote to flash-cook opponents floating on the surface of the water (or in their bath tubs). Used on the open ocean or on a lake, this rote affects only the top few inches of the water's surface. This rote affects nothing a foot or deeper under the water in any way.

ΠΑΙΚAI (THE SEAWARD PULL) [••• MIND]

The target of this spell becomes obsessed with reaching the ocean, diving in and swimming out as far as possible. It was one of the simple ways the mages of Polynesia had of eliminating their enemies. Obviously, if others detain the target and prevent him from reaching the water for the duration of the Effect, he won't drown (growing gills or putting on scuba gear also work) but any determined *kahuna* will wait to strike at the right time (and have surprises waiting in the water for his target as well).



System: The *kahuna* uses potent Mind magic to implant a deep and overriding obsession in the target's psyche.

MANO KAHEA 'AI (SHARK CALL) [••• CORRESPONDENCE, •• MIND]

Sharks were (and, to a degree, still are) constant companions to the early Polynesians. More revered than feared, the shark was considered taboo to women, but a powerful totem for fishermen. This rote summons sharks from the surrounding waters to the *kahuna* (or as close to him as they can swim).

System: The *kahuna* uses Correspondence magic to transmit his mental call to all sharks in the local water. If the mage wills it, he can also incorporate the illusion of the smell of blood in their minds, bringing them into a full-on feeding frenzy. The sharks will not attack the *kahuna* who summoned them if he uses the former version of this rote, but if he uses the latter version, all bets are off.

Because of the shark taboo, female mages cannot use this rote.

Variants of this rote can call other kinds of creatures: Octopi, whales, or any other marine life available.

MO'OKUPUNI PALAHALAHAWIKI (CORAL ISLAND BLOOM) [•• LIFE, ••• PRIMIE, ••• TIME]

Under most circumstances, coral islands take centuries to grow. Mages who like to have islands to themselves often don't have that much patience, and so they put the coral into fast forward, causing a reef to bloom upward toward the sun like a crystalline cloud.

System: The conjunctional Life/Time Effect causes the tiny coral organisms to build up the reef at high speed. Prime is used to fuel the tiny animals; otherwise, they would deplete all nutrients from the water in the space of seconds.

The difficulty of this rote increases by one if the *kahuna* is performing it at night or at a depth greater than 80 feet (the depth at which coral normally grows). Clever *kahunas* will create islands in deep water by using this rote repeatedly to create coral boulders that accrete around a floating core. Once the boulder has grown to a significant size (a thousand feet, say), the mage will let the boulder sink into the depths. He will send these down, one after another, until he has created a suitable island foundation.

Note: Coral islands are largely sterile and don't erode into fertile soil the way volcanic islands do. Most *kahunas* (who want trees and crops on their islands) will use this rote only if they have no means of creating a volcanic island.

PELE WAI'ULA (PELE'S BLOOD) [••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• OR ••••• FORCES, •• MATTER]

The forces of volcanism were instrumental in shaping all of the Polynesian Islands and its effects are still felt in a variety of very real ways, like regular volcanic eruptions on Hawai'i. This rote grants the *kahuna* a degree of control over those

elemental forces of creation, allowing her to summon the lifeblood of the planet itself.

System: The lesser form of this rote uses Forces and Matter magic to open up a volcanic fissure somewhere within the mage's line of sight, reaches deep into the planet and brings lava pouring out while the Forces •••• variant causes a full-scale volcanic eruption. Not only is the former version easier to perform, it's easier to control.

The lava brought about by the lesser version is relatively slow moving and unlikely to catch any but the slowest or most accident-prone enemies, upon whom it inflicts aggravated Forces damage (that is to say, three dice of aggravated damage per success rolled by the *kahuna*'s player).

In the case of a full volcanic eruption, the Storyteller is the final arbiter of the mayhem caused by such an enormous and violent feat.

Amazingly, these rotes are coincidental throughout most of Polynesia (as well as the Philippines, Japan and Iceland) and a handful of other places in the "Ring of Fire," the volcanically active zone circling most of the Pacific Ocean. Elsewhere they are grossly vulgar.

ROKEA'OLE [••• LIFE, ••• SPIRIT]

The mages of Polynesia are more familiar with the Rokea, the shark-changers, than with any other changing breed (and far more familiar than they would like to be). Whereas the true shark is considered good luck, *kahunas* consider Rokea brutish, lethal pains in the ass (even if they are considered semi-divine). This rote forces a Rokea out of its large battle-forms, forcing it into its natural form (usually a shark).

System: Using magic to shape both the body and spirit of the target, the *kahuna* forces the Rokea to revert to its Breed form and prevents it from changing again for 10 minutes per success. If the player is willing to accept a +1 difficulty modifier, he can choose which form (human or shark) the target reverts to. Since the shark-changers detest their human form (except when mating) forcing them into that form *really* pisses them off. Rokea will remember the face of any mage who uses this rote and mark him for a quick and messy death.

WAIPUILANI (WATERSPOUT) [••• FORCES]

A tornado over water produces a waterspout, a funnel-shaped pillar of water sometimes hundreds of feet wide extending from the water's surface up to the clouds. While such a sight is truly awesome, its uses are relatively limited and the few *kahunas* who even remember this rote use it primarily to enthrall or entertain. It has been noted by a few mages, however, that waterspouts are a great way to deal with Technocracy helicopters.

System: Forces magic can generate the waterspout in either of two ways: If there are reasonable clouds in the area, Forces magic manipulates the local weather patterns to create the necessary funnel activity to create the spout. This version can be coincidental if the mage is careful.

Alternatively, the mage can use the sheer power of the Forces Sphere to cause the whirling spout of water to shoot up from the water's surface, even on a perfectly clear day. This version is *always* vulgar.

WONDERS

The *kahunas* of Polynesia were extraordinarily resourceful in figuring out ways of enchanting the relatively scarce resources provided to them by their volcanic island habitats. The Maori *tohungas*, in particular, excelled at injecting art into their Arts: From the ubiquitous tikis, to the elegant jewelry, to the elaborately carved canoes and the wooden panels that stood in front of their homes and communal halls — Maori art remains some of the most complex and well-wrought in the world. And such finely crafted pieces lend themselves especially well to use as Wonders of various sorts.

FLOATING OIL

Level 1 Wonder

Floating oil prevents a person from sinking deeper than an inch in water. If something pulls the wearer under, the moment she is freed she rockets back up to the surface as though she were a balloon full of air (fortunately, the oil protects against the bends as well).

Floating oil was initially concocted to prevent drowning. It may seem redundant, given that children throughout the Polynesian Islands learn to swim at a very early age, but floating oil was formulated primarily to protect the *kahuna*'s family from predation by enemy mages.

In theory, a thick coating of floating oil applied to the feet would also allow the wearer to walk along the surface of the water, but only those with a Dexterity of 5 (or higher) would be advised to even try such a thing.

Kahunas distill floating oil from palm oil and juices extracted from the swim bladders of certain fish. A mage with even a single dot in Matter is likely to know how to brew floating oil; the difficulty comes in obtaining enough swim bladders for a whole application (because swim bladders typically come from deep water fish).

HEI (PENDANT)

Level 1 Wonder

The ornate pendants of Ao Te Aroa are carved either from greenstone (jade) or whale bone. They can be found made of other substances (including plastic) but only these two substances will take on the proper magical charge.

Several varieties of *hei* can be found throughout New Zealand, but the two most common are the *hei-tiki* and the *hei-matau*.

Hei-Matau

The *hei-matau* pendant is mentioned as far back as the myth of Maui, one of the principal Polynesian gods. Resembling an ornately carved fishhook, the *hei-matau* gifts its wearer with good luck at all times while he's over water.

[Twice per game-day — so long as the wearer of the *hei-matau* is in the ocean or on it in a boat (planes don't count) — he can re-roll any die that comes up "1." If the player rolls a horrible botch, he can use both of these re-rolls at once.]

Hei-Tiki

The *hei-tiki* pendant is a smaller, less potent version of the true tikis (see *Tikis*, below); as such, it is a Fetish containing a minor health or fertility spirit.

The *hei-tiki* is a stylized human form with a large head that composes about half of the pendant's size. The mouth is generally to one side or the other and the eyes are traditionally inset with *paua* shell (or *Haliotis iris*, as Westerners are wont to call it). The remainder of the body features an oversized abdomen, legs in squatting position, heels together with hands resting on the thighs.

The *hei-tiki* is unquestionably a phallic symbol, and different versions of the *hei-tiki* reveal that to greater or lesser degrees. Maori women used to wear *hei-tikis* to prevent barrenness and men wore them for increased virility. Most *hei-tiki* pendants created by modern *tohungas* are less explicitly for fertility and more commonly for general health and well being.

[A minor spirit of health or fertility is bound into the *hei-tiki*, benefiting the wearer in one of the following ways.

- The wearer of the *hei-tiki* gains one extra Bruised Health Level while she wears the pendant.
- The wearer of the *hei-tiki* gets one extra die for all Soak rolls.
- The *hei-tiki* grants the wearer the equivalent of one extra point of Stamina for the purposes of performing strenuous, extended-duration activities (swimming, running, climbing, magic rituals, etc.). This blessing applies any time the wearer engages in such activity.

• The wearer of the *hei-tiki* performs all healing Effects at a -1 difficulty.

One person can wear multiple *hei-tiki* pendants, but real *hei-tiki* pendants are rare enough that finding one, no less four, is likely to be quite a task unless one is (or is a close friend of) a Maori *tohunga* — and while the Maori are a gracious people, they're not likely to offer their Wonders casually to any random tourist, acquaintance or recent buddy.]

KAHU HURUHURU (FEATHER CLOAK)

Level 2 Wonder

Of the better known Wonders of the Maori, the feather cloak is the most prized for the many blessings it confers to its wearer. Not only is it beautiful, it also adds to the wearer's social abilities, in part by granting him a pronounced degree of regal bearing that is difficult to ignore.

[While wearing the beautiful *kahu huruhuru*, the *tohunga* makes all social rolls at -3 difficulty. Furthermore, as long as the mage is wearing the feathered cloak, he gets three dice of automatic countermagic against any hostile Effects.

Creating a *kahu huruhuru* is extraordinarily demanding, even for the creation of an artifact, and the *tohunga* must make

TATU: SKIN MAGIC

Throughout Polynesia, the tattoo was developed as an art form as it was nowhere else in the world. The word tattoo comes from the Tahitian word *tatu*. Almost every archipelago — Ao Te Aroa, Fiji, Samoa, Tahiti, Hawaii, and especially Te Henua Enata — evinces its own development of the tattoo as an important cultural art.

It was in Te Henua Enata, the Marquesas Islands, that tattoos first became magically augmented. It says a great deal that the Marquesan word *tuhuna* means both “mage” and “tattoo artist.” In Marquesan culture, tattoos were a great sign of stature, indicative of wealth, power and the ability to endure great pain. The most elaborate, full-body tattoos were worn only by chiefs, great warriors and, of course, the *tuhuna*. Fathers would save for years to be able to afford the lengthy tattoo rituals of the *tuhunas*. For the duration of the tattoo ritual (which could take months, depending on the complexity of the design and the recipient’s pain tolerance), the family of the tattooed individual would feed, clothe and pamper the *tuhuna* and his *ka’ioi* (his band of acolytes, consorts and apprentices).

For the duration of the tattoo ritual, the individual receiving the tattoo practiced extended fasting and was barred from engaging in sex with women, or even leaving the property of his family.

When the *tuhuna* had completed the tattoo, the recipient of the tattoo would emerge from the house where the tattoo ritual had been performed, feast, and the village would greet him according to the new status he held due to the tattoos.

Christian missionaries forbade tattoos, calling them “a sinful glorification of the flesh,” and the *tuhunas* were forced to go underground, and by the latter half of the 19th century, the ancient art of tattooing had nearly died out throughout all of Polynesia.

Various *kahunas*, *tuhunas* and *tohungas*, however, preserved the arts and the last two decades have seen such a resurgence in interest in tattoos that tattoo designs are even decorating postage stamps in Tahiti. Given the deep connection between tattoos and magic throughout the South Pacific, there are many *tuhunas* who believe that a new age of Polynesian magic may be at hand.

To clarify the terminology: A tattoo is a simple form of adornment. A *tatu* is a mark imbued with magical power. The traditional Maori skin modification, *Te Moko*, may or may not also be invested with magical power (above and beyond its inherent cultural meaning).

Tatus span the gamut from modestly helpful to phenomenally powerful. Many *tatus* — though by no means all — are defensive in some way. As a general rule, the larger and more complex the *tatu*, the more powerful the magic it holds.

The *tatus* that follow are indicative of how the Polynesians used them, but these represent only the tiniest fraction of those magics with which *tatus* were imbued.

Aole Koheoheo Tatu (Level 1 Wonder): This design, a simple black circle on the sternum, protects the wearer against all poison and venom, rendering him immune to dangers as different as poisoned spears, alcohol poisoning, and Ananasi venom.

[The aole koheoheo tatu grants its wearer five automatic successes on soak rolls against poisons and venoms of all sorts.]

Lawai'a Tatu (Level 2 Wonder): Called “the fisherman’s *tatu*” because it was typically given only to an island’s best fishermen as a reward, the lawai'a tatu takes the form of three wavy lines on either side of the neck slightly resembling the gills of a fish.

[Anytime the wearer’s neck is beneath the surface of the water, the lines become gills, allowing her to breathe under water. The moment the wearer’s neck comes back above the surface of the water, the gills again revert to simple *tatus*.]

He'e Tatu (Level 2 Wonder): Most Polynesian *tatus* are simple tribal or geometrical designs. The he'e (“octopus”) *tatu* is one of the few that uses representative art. The design is of a large octopus, with the head either on the wearer’s chest or back and with the tentacles wrapping around the length of the limbs. This *tatu* grants the octopus’ ability to change color and blend in with its surroundings.

[At will, the wearer of the he'e *tatu* can change the color of his skin. If she is trying to blend in with her surroundings and avoid being spotted, she must remain still. Make a Stamina + Stealth roll, subtracting the successes from any Perception + Alertness rolls made to spot the character. If she moves, the viewers’ difficulty to see her is reduced by three (unless she’s hiding in bushes or other cover).]

Note: This *tatu* affects skin (and hair), not clothes, so to get the full effect the wearer must be naked.]

‘O’ole Tatu (Level 4 Wonder): One of the most painful *tatus* possible, the ‘o’ole *tatu* covers the entire body, including the face, scalp, eyelids and genitals, with an incredibly complex pattern of repeated pentagons (based on the shape of a crab’s shell). It was typically given only to the most loyal and skilled warriors of a tribe. Once the skin has healed from the *tatu* ritual, it grows more resilient to all harm thereafter.

[The wearer of the ‘o’ole *tatu* gains five additional dice with which to soak all damage, including lethal and aggravated. The downside to this is that it increases the difficulty of social rolls by one. At the Storyteller’s discretion there may be some rare individuals for whom the *tatu* is a turn-on, and with those people, the difficulty of the wearer’s social rolls go down by one or, in extreme cases, two.]

it by hand, unassisted. Bleached *muka* (flax fiber) must be spun unto yarn, woven and shaped. To this base the mage attaches hundreds of feathers from the (immensely rare) albino kiwi. A mage wanting to add color to the cloak may also attach green feathers from the wood pigeon, red feathers from the New Zealand parrot or the blue-black feathers of the tui bird.]

МОКОМАІ

Level 3 Wonder

Ancient Polynesians from Hawaii to Ao Te Aroa believed that mana (Quintessence) pools in the head, even in the heads of corpses. To take advantage of that, certain *kahunas* would collect heads in a “mana battery” of sorts and create a link between themselves and the talisman, allowing them to call on the Quintessence whenever they needed it.

[The heads must be whole and in good shape. They must be dried and either woven together by the hair, carefully stacked together in a pile facing out or displayed on a specially carved stone skull rack. To complete the mokomai, the *kahuna* must weave in a powerful Correspondence 3/Prime 3/Spirit 3 Effect.

Once the *kahuna* has completed the creation rite, he may use the Quintessence stored in the mokomai as easily as that stored in his own Pattern. The Quintessence in such a device returns only slowly, however — one point per week, although a mage is free to use a Prime 3 Effect to channel Quintessence into the mokomai faster. Furthermore, any mokomai fully drained of Quintessence must be re-enchanted or the heads lose their ability to store mana.

The head of a normal person will hold one point of Quintessence, the head of a *kahuna* or powerful warrior will hold two points, and the head of a chief with proper *te moko* (See *Te Moko*, above) or a Rokea (or other changer) will hold three points.]

ОХО-КУІ (BATTLE WIG)

Level 4 Wonder

The oho-kui is an enormous, bushy headdress of pounded leaf fibers that warriors wear into battle. To modern eyes it looks a bit like a bushy, straight-hair wig, and it can be dyed nearly any color (brighter colors are thought to impart more ferocity in the wearer, so violent red, nauseous green and vivid magenta are popular). The oho-kui resembles an enormous mane radiating out from the wearer's face and down his back. Some also incorporate a large tiki mask as an additional intimidating element.

The purpose of the oho-kui is to protect the wearer by absorbing attacks, a function it does quite well. While not outlandishly powerful, Hawaiian warriors have long coveted oho-kuis for the protection they grant in battle.

[The oho-kui does two things for its wearer: It gives him three extra Bruised Health Levels and three automatic successes on all soak rolls while he's wearing it. The oho-kui regenerates the Health Levels at the rate of one per full day of “rest.”]

PAHU INO-NUI (THE CHAOS DRUM)

Level 5 Wonder

One of the most devastating weapons in the *kahuna* arsenal, the pahu ino-nui is also, luckily, the rarest, with only two ever known to have been made. The pahu ino-nui is an enormous drum six feet long by five feet in diameter. It's suspended from a frame with the drum head perpendicular to the ground and played by a sitting drummer using a pair of inch-thick rounded wooden drum sticks. Its appearance alone is interesting, but mere appearances give no indication of what the drum can do: The pahu ino-nui is easily comparable to the greatest war magics of Hermetic House Flambeau.

The user of the chaos drum begins by beating the drum in time with the weather. A beautiful day with calm seas would equate to a slow, steady beat while a typical storm would indicate a slightly faster, slightly more complicated, rhythm. Even played softly, the penetrating reverberations of the pahu ino-nui can be felt through the earth a quarter of a mile away and heard even farther away than that.

Once the drummer has played that basic baseline rhythm for 15 minutes or so, connecting to the earth, the sky and the water, the drummer can begin picking up the pace. The faster and more complex the rhythms, the more violent the weather becomes.

Playing the chaos drum is strenuous activity. A character with a Stamina of two will be able to play for, maybe, five minutes before the muscle fatigue in his forearms keeps him from even holding the drumsticks. Any mage not in excellent physical condition (Stamina 5) who wants to get the most out of the pahu ino-nui should use Life magic beforehand to increase his Stamina, or he's likely to tire long before he even gets to the more interesting and violent weather.

And the effects of the chaos drum get very interesting and violent: After an hour of working up the elements, the drum whips up multiple simultaneous typhoons, 40-foot storm surges, electrical storms, tsunamis, earthquakes, geysers, water spouts, violent volcanic eruptions (above and below the ocean), and even meteor swarms.

Through all of this, the mage, sitting in a 10-foot circle of absolute calm, won't even feel so much as a breeze or a single drop of rain.

[The full effects of the pahu ino-nui are up to the Storyteller, but after the first full hour of drumming, the damage inflicted on individuals (and structures) is assigned as per an ongoing Forces 5 Effect.]

TIKIS

The importance of the tiki in Polynesian magic has to be understood in the context of its history.

The tiki has deep roots in Polynesian culture, clarifying why, despite the cultural changes that took place as the

Polynesian people continued moving from island to island, the tiki remained a key element in the magic of the *kahunas*.

The tiki is a representation of the first man (whose name was "Tik" or "Tiki"). Through the process of ancestor worship, this first man took on demigod status and the name "Tiki" became a common term for any representation of man. Throughout Polynesia, the tiki has become a personification of the human race as a whole. It is a symbol of the right of humanity to coexist with spirits in the world, a physical "contract" of sorts substantiating humanity's place in the universe. To the *kahunas*, Tiki is a sort of divine ally in the world of the spirits, a kindly ancestor advocating for his offspring. Consequently, most uses of Spirit magic have tikis as a focus, and on some islands the *kahunas* use tikis as a focus in one way or another for all or most of their magical Effects. And the tiki is used as the basic pattern for all Wonders, fetishes in particular, throughout the South Pacific.

But Tiki is even more than that. "Tiki" was also the name of the phallus and the divine procreative power of Tane, the creator-god. In the Austral Islands south of Tahiti, *tiki-roa* (the word for a tall, standing tiki figure) remains the slang term for the penis. All of these sexual elements are, at root, linked and directly connected to the first use to which magically active tikis were put: to increase fertility.

Lastly, the god Tiki is a god of creation (above and beyond procreation) and, for that reason, he is the god of *kahunas*, artists and artisans throughout the South Pacific.

Tikis represent an old, old form of performing magic, one more familiar to the more "primordial" Traditions like the Cult of Ecstasy and Dreamspeakers. Similar items, magical and otherwise, can be found throughout the world, but especially around the Pacific Rim. For example, a tiki is closely related to a *tupilak* (see **Dead Magic**, page 134).

Temples to the Polynesian gods and sancta of practicing *kahunas* will almost always be surrounded by an array of tikis, either free-standing or perched atop poles.

DEFINITION

A tiki is a carving shaped to resemble a god or spirit. Tikis are known throughout the South Pacific and Hawaiian islands mainly, but all seem to share the same mystical purpose: Tikis are created to house spirits. Every tiki contains its own spirit. Since no two spirits are alike, neither are any two tikis.

Tikis are often carved out of wood, but sculpted stone tikis are relatively common as well, particularly in certain parts of Polynesia (the giant carved heads, or *moai*, of Rapa Nui are tikis and, in their prime around 500 years ago, were some of the most powerful tikis in existence, each containing one powerful spirit or a swarm of lesser spirits all bound into the tiki).

Tikis range in size from the size of a thumb (often worn as lockets) to several feet high. They can be starkly simple or decorated with jewelry, skulls or other bones, cloth or the bright feathers of tropical birds.

Some tikis are so abstract that they bear very little resemblance to a man at all, but in many cases, this may have been intentional on the artisan's (or the *kahuna's*) part. Some tikis perform destructive magic, and so the tiki would need to appear as something else, lest the target get suspicious (the other way of handling this problem, of course, is to make the tiki so small that it can be easily hidden near its intended target).

In short, individual tikis vary radically from one another. That said, tikis that share a common purpose share certain characteristics. Fertility tikis, for example, tend to be longer and more phallic, while war tikis are squatter and have a more malevolent appearance. Likewise, certain materials are better suited to tikis of a particular type. Wood and bone, having once been alive and still containing the memory of life, make good fertility tikis, while stone (with the exception of green-stone, or jade) does not. Long term warding tikis and tikis that potentially have to withstand a lot of wear and tear — either from the passage of time or as a side effect of being caught between two warring *kahunas* — are better carved from stone.

CREATION

A *kahuna* must carve or sculpt any tiki he hopes to use for mystical purposes. Although there are exceptions, trying to enchant a tiki created by someone else is generally a useless endeavor. The mage must have at least two dots in Crafts to create a tiki.

For a wooden tiki, the mage must choose the type of tree best suited to the tiki he hopes to make. The wood of certain trees is more attuned to certain kinds of magic. In Hawaii, for example, most tikis are made from the wood of the *ohia-apane*, a type of native apple tree.

Stone tikis require igneous rock — rock formed under immense heat and pressure and associated with volcanic activity. Some stone tikis may require even more specific types of stone — black basalt with gold flecks that has never seen sunlight, for example, or obsidian taken from the sea floor.

Once the mage has carved the basic figure of the tiki, he may need to adorn it with other important elements of the tiki — the feathers of a certain bird, a certain kind of decorative seashell or a particular color of fabric, for example.

Once the mage is finished with the physical process of tiki creation, she can begin with the magical elements.

The first step is the ritual cleansing of the tiki of harmful or troublesome native influences. This, as with all the subsequent steps of tiki creation, is done as an extended action. Depending on the substance being worked (wood spirits tend to be more fractious, but less difficult to exorcise while stone spirits are typically amenable to enchantment but they are extraordinarily difficult to appease or exorcise, and they can provide a great deal of antagonism for the mage).

The number of successes necessary on an Arete roll for the cleansing ritual is 25 for wood and 50 for stone. The

process, obviously, takes a number of days and the mage should plan on getting a lot of sleep before the cleansing, because he's not likely to get it once the ritual has begun.

Once the tiki has been cleansed, the *kahuna* places a number of different Effects into the tiki. One enchantments the tiki so as to make it a natural Quintessence-sink so that ambient Quintessence is drawn to the tiki. Another Effect binds a spirit of the appropriate type into the physical vessel of the tiki. Some *kahunas* weave an Entropy Effect into the tiki that facilitates the spirit's tasks with sheer happenstance — a blessing on the spirit, to put it in the simplest terms.

USES

The tiki is to Polynesian magic what software applications are to the Virtual Adepts: the central means through which long-term magical Effects are wrought. Tikis are limited only by the imagination and power of their creators. There are some *kahunas* who do nothing but create tikis once their power and enlightenment reach the requisite levels. These can be compared to Sons of Ether who spend all their time tinkering in their workshops — it's not an exciting life, but it's rewarding to those few who are content with it.

Many tikis perform dull but important magical work: They keep the fish populations along a certain reef thriving; they ward off blight spirits from crops and disease spirits from villages; they may repel tsunamis, dampen earthquakes, slow the rate at which the creating *kahuna* ages or perform any of a thousand other subtle tasks considered important by the *kahuna*.

A sampling of some of the primary types of tikis appears below. While the Storyteller is free to use the ones given, he is also urged to come up with others of his own invention.

TIKIS AND PARADOX

As with all popular magics, there are ways of creating tikis that do not rely on Spirit magic. While these often have significant advantages over the Fetish tikis, they have one predominant disadvantage: Their Effects *can be* vulgar. Spirit magic used with tikis, on the other hand, works *with* the grain of reality, not against it, and consequently does not incur Paradox. Some of the tikis listed below (the ward tiki, for example) are, oddly enough, coincidental if spirit magic is used to make the tiki a Fetish but vulgar otherwise. There are a number of reasons for this.

The magical nature of tikis is obvious; it's one of the reasons they are so popular (and the key to the tiki fad that swept North America from the '50s to the late '60s). Not only are tikis powerful tools for a *kahuna*, but they emanate a sense of power, a certain exotic mystique that even the unAwakened can feel: Consequently, when something uncanny occurs in their presence, it is perfectly in line with expectations (either conscious or unconscious), and no one is particularly surprised.

That effect is even more prominent throughout the islands of Polynesia. For that reason, anywhere in the South Pacific the definition of what counts as coincidental (with respect to tikis) is *much* broader than it would be in, say, Cincinnati, Ohio, the Banality capital of North America. How much vulgar tiki magic a Storyteller opts to overlook is up to him, but he should remember that outside of the few big cities in Polynesia (Auckland and Honolulu being the biggest) the paradigm still has a good deal more give than it does anywhere in North America, particularly when it comes to tikis, a form of magic that has been in use in the South Pacific for over 2000 years. Note that this is true for practitioners of *Huna*. A non-Polynesian mage who learns some of the basics of South Seas magic and tries to use a tiki in weird, modern ways (to broadcast TV signals, for example) is just asking for a Paradox backlash.

TYPES

Fertility Tiki

The original tiki figures were dedicated entirely to protecting the fertility of crops and increasing the fecundity of those within the tiki's area of effect. It was through the use of fertility tikis that the Polynesian peoples were able to settle so many islands so effectively in such a brief period. Due to the success of the fertility tikis, the Polynesian people were able to settle all across the South Pacific — taking the magical art of the tiki with them.

Fertility tikis poorly used, it should also be noted, played a key role in the overpopulation and subsequent tragedy on Rapa Nui.

Effects: Fertility spirits are some of the oldest and most established that mankind has striven to placate. Those bound into fertility fetish tikis support the general health of those in the tiki's range, frighten away imps of impotence and increase the likelihood of pregnancy.

Fertility tikis that don't use spirits accomplish the same general goals with a Life 2, Entropy 2 Effect, possibly with a Mind 2 Effect acting as a constant low-level aphrodisiac.

Appearance: Fertility tikis are generally more rounded and usually resemble small, stylized humans with squat bodies and short, pudgy limbs, like a baby.

Passion Tiki

Like fertility tikis — but quite a bit more intense — are passion tikis, which cause those in the tiki's range to fall prey to their carnal urges for anyone and everyone nearby. While a good number of these primal Wonders have been destroyed (no small few by shocked Chorister missionaries after falling prey to a prank effected by a well-placed passion tiki), many of them were created and deliberately shipped to North America during the tiki fad of the '60s by Hawaiian *kahunas* angry at the exploitation and destruction of Hawaiian culture. These items may yet linger in the basements, attics and

dens of senescent erstwhile swingers (no doubt next to a crate of Martin Denny LPs), waiting to be discovered by their innocent and unwary grandchildren....

Effects: Passion tikis contain spirits of lust and passion that, over the space of an hour (or so), remove all inhibitions and gently nudge those within range into acts of playful, experimental sexuality. While the experience itself can be great fun, the consequences can be... problematic.

The Talisman version of the passion tiki weaves in a Mind 3, Life 2 Effect that anesthetizes sexual inhibitions while simultaneously piquing desire.

Appearance: Passion tikis look a great deal like fertility tikis, only ithyphallic and with the countenance frozen in a perpetual impish grin.

Lore: There are rumors of a Cultist of Ecstasy who collects passion tikis. His collection allegedly contains over 20 passion tikis, culled over years of devoted effort and a great deal of travel throughout Polynesia. One can only wonder to what end he might put such a collection.

War Tiki

The war tiki followed the fertility tiki in short order. No sooner had the Polynesian people radiated outward to new islands than they developed a whole new tribal identity and began warring against each other.

War tikis, as their name implies, assist the mage with matters of warfare. When a mage creates a war tiki, he and everyone it is intended to help bleeds onto the tiki as a part of the creation process. Once the tiki is completed, all those “recognized” by the tiki will benefit from a number of advantages when engaged in combat in the tiki’s line of sight.

Effects: War tikis house spirits of rage and combat that help in a number of different ways. The most common form of war tiki grants the following abilities: -1 on all difficulties to hit, one extra die for all Dodge rolls and one extra die for all soak rolls. The spirits of war are a varied lot, however, and exactly what form their battle blessings take may vary.

The Talisman version of the war tiki weaves in a Life 3 Effect that grants an extra dot in Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, so long as the recipient is engaged in physical combat within line of sight of the tiki.

Appearance: The war tiki is more primitive looking than the fertility tiki, little more than a tree trunk carved with a stylized snarling human face. Jagged bits of shell may be used for the exposed teeth of the war tiki, and the eyes are most often carved from human bone.

Guardian Tiki

Distances that seem small by modern plane and automobile standards were daunting to the pre-Technocracy Polynesians. If a rival *kahuna* attacked your village five minutes after you started paddling to a distant island to collect feathers from the sacred parrots, under most conditions you wouldn’t know until hours or days after the fact,

and probably too late to catch him. But with a guardian tiki, you’d know the moment your nemesis made his appearance and you’d be able to get back in time to prevent at least some of your family members from being sacrificed and butchered for meat.

Effects: A guardian tiki houses spirits that report back to the mage who created it. Typically the mage will give the spirits very clear instructions concerning which events to convey and which not to.

Kahunas who dislike using spirits can get the same effect by placing a combination Correspondence and Entropy Effect on the tiki. The Entropic element is added so the Correspondence Effect will kick in only under certain circumstances: “Let me see what is happening in that cave only if there is violence,” or “I want to hear every word that is said when there are others in this temple but me”.

Appearance: Huge eyes (and sometimes ears) are the key features of a guardian tiki. Typically half the figure is made up of the squat little body topped by an oversized head that, in turn, has oversized, slightly malevolent eyes and strangely squared-off ears.

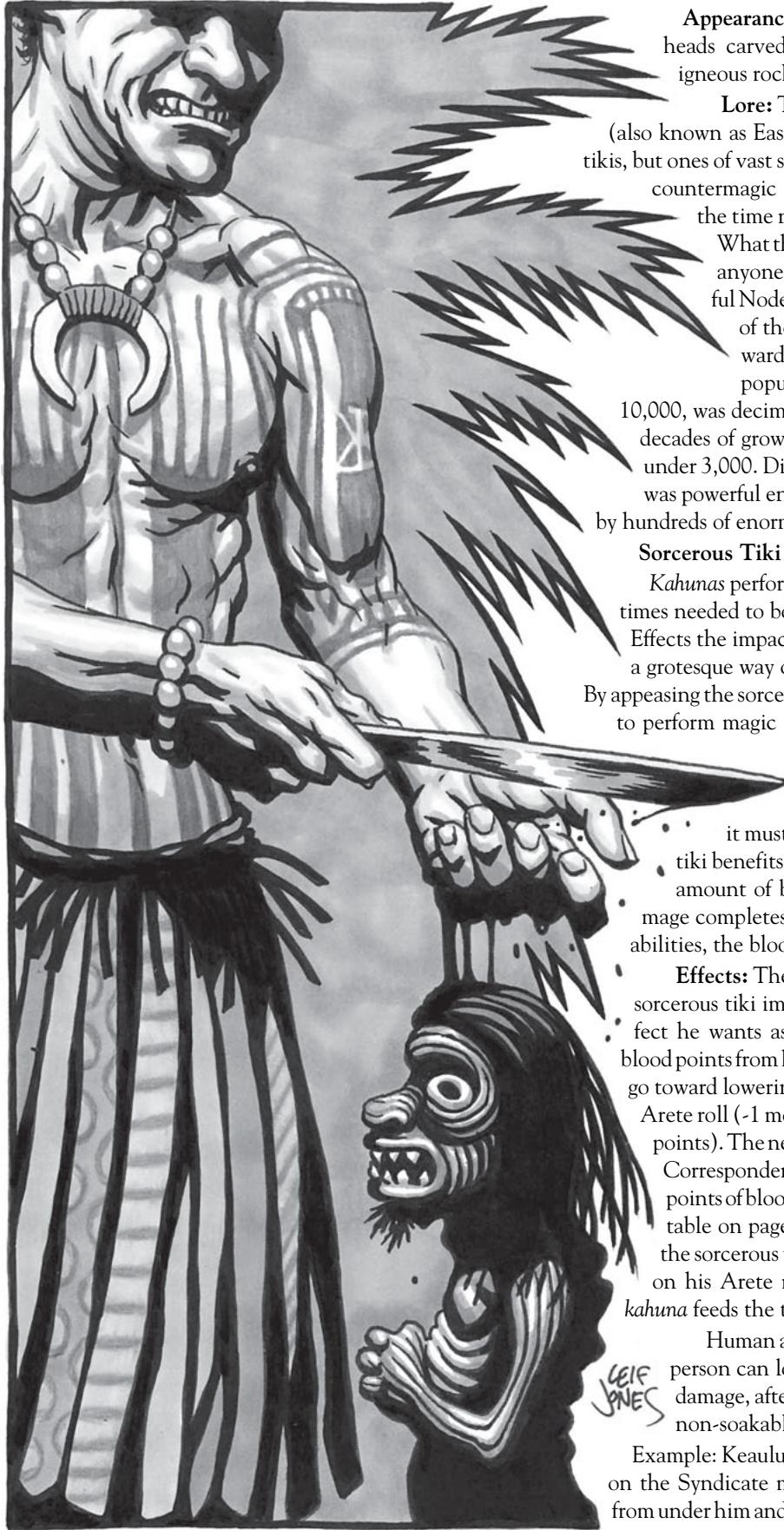
Ward Tiki

Ward tikis deny access to certain persons, spirits or phenomena, and as such they are extremely useful and concomitantly common. Ward tikis can be used to prevent an enemy from entering a village, repel a cannibal spirit or keep a tsunami from inundating a village. A ward tiki can ward against only one thing, but there’s nothing keeping a *kahuna* from putting an array of ward tikis around his home to keep a variety of threats at bay — one for lava flows, one for Rokea, one for disease spirits and so on.

Effects: Ward tikis house spirits of strife or repulsion that work to repel the thing the tiki wards against. This is usually very subtle. Lava flows will branch and narrowly miss the warded area, hostile people will get lost or suffer accidents on their way to the warded area, and so on. The closer the thing warded against gets to the warded area, the less subtle the spirits will be until they finally resort to extreme tactics, including blunt physical force.

Kahunas who prefer not to use spirits can obtain similar results by weaving a simple Correspondence 3 Ban into the enchantment that simply creates a wall of force through which the specified entity or thing cannot pass.

A less vulgar variant uses an Entropy 3 Effect to put coincidental obstacle after coincidental obstacle in the way of those things or entities warded against. If the thing warded against is alive, a Correspondence 3/Entropy 4 Effect woven in will see to it that the body of the individual warded against simply gives out before reaching the area protected by the tiki, betrayed by an increasingly serious series of sprained ankles, inexplicable pain, illnesses, heart attacks, cancer and strokes.



Appearance: Ward tikis are generally grim oblong heads carved out of gray granite (although any igneous rock will do).

Lore: The *moai*, or giant statues on Rapa Nui (also known as Easter Island or Isla de Pascua) are ward tikis, but ones of vast size. All 600 had been neutralized with countermagic and knocked from their platforms by the time non-Polynesians arrived on the island.

What the builders attempted to ward against is anyone's guess. Given the moderately powerful Node under Rapa Nui and the immense size of the *moai*, they should have been able to ward off anything. Strange, then, that the population of the island, once around 10,000, was decimated and its modern population, after decades of growth and settlement, still lingers at just under 3,000. Did the wards fail? And if they did, what was powerful enough to break through a ward created by hundreds of enormous (and powerful) ward tikis?

Sorcerous Tiki

Kahunas performing magic over long distances sometimes needed to boost their magical ability to give their Effects the impact they wanted. The sorcerous tiki was a grotesque way of increasing the mage's effectiveness.

By appeasing the sorcerous tiki with blood, the mage was able to perform magic more easily. Where the blood comes from is moot; it could be the mage's, his friends', or that of a sacrifice.

The blood need not be human, but it must come from a mammal. The sorcerous tiki benefits the *kahuna* in direct proportion to the amount of blood that is spilled on it. When the mage completes the spell for which he used the tiki's abilities, the blood is sucked into the tiki.

Effects: The mage makes his blood sacrifice to the sorcerous tiki immediately prior to performing the Effect he wants assistance with. For this, he measures blood points from his victims. The initial six blood points go toward lowering the overall difficulty number of the Arete roll (-1 modifier to difficulty for every two blood points). The next 12 blood points reduce the effective Correspondence range by one step for every two points of blood (as per the "Correspondence Ranges" table on page 209 of the *Mage* core book). Lastly, the sorcerous tiki grants the mage one additional die on his Arete roll for every 10 points of blood the *kahuna* feeds the tiki.

Human adults hold about 10 points of blood. A person can lose three blood points without taking damage, after which he suffers one Health Level of non-soakable damage per blood point lost.

Example: Keaulumoku, a young *kahuna*, wants revenge on the Syndicate member who bought his sanctum out from under him and turned it into a massage parlor. He has

LEIF
JONES

two goats he's willing to sacrifice to the sorcerous tiki, each with four points of blood.

Keaulumoku wants to affect the Syndicate member with Ana'ana, the Death Prayer (see *Rotes*, above). The rote is coincidental (anyone can get sick and die — it happens all the time) and the highest Sphere needed is three dots. The target is distant, raising the difficulty by one, leaving Keaulumoku with a difficulty of seven. To perform an impressive feat at such a distance, the *kahuna* would normally need nine successes. Keaulumoku only has an Arete of three, so it could take a while to get the Effect he's looking for.

Luckily, Keaulumoku has a sorcerous tiki.

The mage puts the tiki in the bottom of a large wooden bowl and exsanguinates both goats into the bowl, giving him eight points of blood to work with.

The first six points of blood reduce his difficulty by three, leaving him with a difficulty of four. Getting nine successes at that difficulty is easier, but still nothing to sneeze at. He uses the last two points of goat blood to reduce the Correspondence range by one, then, thinking better of it, he opens a vein and adds four points of his own blood (leaving him a little weak). And he spends a point of Willpower for a free success.

These last six points of blood reduce the effective Correspondence range from "Described Location" to "Very familiar." Instead of needing nine successes, Keaulumoku only needs six. Furthermore, the extra points of his own blood that Keaulumoku fed the tiki put him over 10 points, giving him an extra die on his Arete roll, giving him a total of four dice (and one automatic success).

So, thanks to the sorcerous tiki, instead of needing nine successes at a difficulty of seven, he needs only five successes at a difficulty of four — a much more manageable feat.

And a few hours later, somewhere in Jersey City, New Jersey, a Technocrat hacks up a piece of lung....

The Fetish version of the sorcerous tiki uses spirits of communication, possibly corrupted ones. It's not entirely impossible that a sorcerous tiki could cause some kind of interference with the Digital Web or the Web of Faith if used a great deal in regions where either of those Webs was in heavy use. Virtual Adept and Technocrat alike would be more than a little surprised to see a tiki icon on their screen....

The Talisman version of the sorcerous tiki requires a potent Prime 4/Correspondence 3 Effect be woven in during the creation of the tiki.

Appearance: Sorcerous tikis are relatively small, rarely standing more than 10 inches tall. Of all the traditional tikis, sorcerous tikis are the most naturally proportioned, having a head that is just a little too large for their strange bodies. The heads of sorcerous tikis have large eyes and small, jagged teeth (either shark teeth or jagged shards of shell embedded in the wood). The most disturbing thing about sorcerous tikis is that they have full heads of real, long human hair. Some crafters

of sorcerous tikis have used entire human scalps for this, but that degree of authenticity isn't necessary; adhering loose human hair with tar or sap works just as well, provided the hair is at least six inches long.

Lore: Christian missionaries referred to sorcerous tikis as "devil dolls" and mistakenly assumed that the tikis were some form of demonic idol. Learning that the "devil dolls" could absorb several times their own volume in blood did nothing to address the missionaries' concerns.

Because of the missionaries' efforts (and because of their unquestionable utility) sorcerous tikis are the rarest of all the tiki varieties listed here.

Fortune Tiki

Kahunas who want to benefit from uncommonly good luck create fortune tikis to assure that things turn out well for them, while *kahunas* wishing to bring bad luck to enemies can do just that by planting a bad luck tiki in the home of their adversary.

Effects: Spirits of good fortune are bound into tikis designed to bring good luck, while spirits of bad luck are bound into tikis with that function.

The Talisman version of the fortune tiki incorporates an Entropy 3 Effect. Some *kahunas* want the benefits of their fortune tikis even when they're far from home. If they're so inclined, and have the proper Arts, they may weave in a Correspondence 3 Effect as well, allowing their good luck to follow them even across great distances. Obviously, *kahunas* using tikis to cause bad luck can incorporate the Correspondence Effect as well, but such magic is relatively easy to sense and counter using Correspondence 2 and 3 Effects, respectively. Mages without Correspondence (or Sleepers, for that matter), could be in for a very long streak of bad luck.

Appearance: The fortune tiki smiles and, even if the smile is half demented and half malevolent, it's still the only one of the traditional tikis to do so. Those carving fortune tikis claim that the look on the tiki's face is the mad joy of having such good fortune, although there are some who claim that the luck brought by the fortune tiki brings a strange madness with it as well.

The fortune tiki is carved from the wood of the ohia-apane tree, a species of apple native to the islands of Polynesia. Small pearls are used for the eyes.

Dormancy Tiki

On islands where volcanic activity is more prevalent, dormancy tikis have been used to lessen the frequency of volcanic eruptions or even stop them altogether. A ring of dormancy tikis must be placed around the volcano facing inward.

Effects: Dormancy tikis house spirits that soothe the spirits of volcanism. They lull the spirits of eruption to sleep, preventing the volcano from erupting and thereby safeguarding those living on the island.

Appearance: Dormancy tikis must be carved out of basalt or some other igneous rock. They tend to be somewhat oblong, with high conical heads. The eyes of dormancy tikis are made of polished obsidian.

Lore: It should be noted that during the *kahuna* wars, at least one mage and his extended family was annihilated entirely when his most reviled enemy, unbeknownst to him, replaced his dormancy tikis with antagonizing tikis, spurring the volcanic spirits into an eruptive fury, utterly destroying all life on the island and increasing the size of the island by three times over the course of a year.

CHRONICLE NOTES

The essence of a Polynesian chronicle should be the unknown. For a Western mage, accustomed to a European worldview, life in the South Pacific as it was experienced by the mages of the regions is difficult to imagine. The boundaries between humanity and the primordial are thinner here and while the people are naturally gracious and pleasant, passions can be volcanic.

It was those heightened passions that led to the ongoing conflicts between the mages of Polynesia during the age of high Polynesian magic (circa 700 to 1300 C.E.) The enormous wars conducted by the *kahunas* of the South Pacific were things of legend — easily the equal of any European conflict. The plenitude of Quintessence and the lack of a set belief paradigm out on the open ocean gave the *kahunas* immense freedom to shape reality as they saw fit (though Reality had its ways of fighting back if a mage went truly overboard, perhaps helping to explain the rise and fall of both cultures and islands). Even after 200 years of the Technocracy carefully sweeping evidence under the carpet, the South Pacific still reveals its rich magical history through a profusion of tikis, sunken islands, haunted islands, cannibal spirits, slumbering volcano gods and stranger things.

Modern *kahunas* may know some of the lore that has been passed from mage to mage, but much of the magical history of Polynesia has been lost, and those things that have been lost can often be inadvertently stumbled over. The Storyteller is invited to explore some of these ideas in his Chronicle. Among other ideas to look at:

1. By all appearances, the Kopa Loei Craft has splintered, pressured on one side by the Technocracy and pulled on the other by the invitation of the Traditions. Those *kahunas* who opted not to join the Dreamspeakers are scattered throughout Polynesia. Are they *really* content to observe the old ways in solitude on their islands, or are they up to something?

2. Polynesia's links to Southeast Asia may not serve it well. Some of the Yama Kings (essentially, demon lords) of Asia may have their eyes on one or more of the island clusters in the South Pacific. Two in particular, Hahano Fukami and Honoyeta, are discussed in more detail in *1,000 Hells, White*

Wolf's guidebook on these devils and their foul kingdoms for *Kindred of the East*.

3. Two (or more) *kahunas* have come into conflict with each other, and the forces that the two are bringing to bear on one another threaten to take on the hostility (if not the sheer scope) of the old battles between Polynesian mages. Through some connection (the Sphinx, perhaps) the players' cabal is called in to intervene before the Technocracy takes matters into its own hands.

4. A violent earthquake pushes an island up from the sea floor in or near Polynesia — an island that shows evidence of having been settled and home to a strangely advanced culture before plunging beneath the waves. Is it Atlantis? R'lyeh? Mu? And what's with all the strange statues of fish-deities?

Whole chronicles can be built around the risen island notion. The characters may need assistance from a local mage, one familiar with the magical history of the South Pacific. Was the island sunken out of spite by a powerful mage during the *kahuna* wars? Did the island house a Nephantic cult? If so, what kinds of dark knowledge might be found there to tempt the unwary? Or, have the Nephandi so grown in power that they raised the island as part of some new warped and monstrous plan?

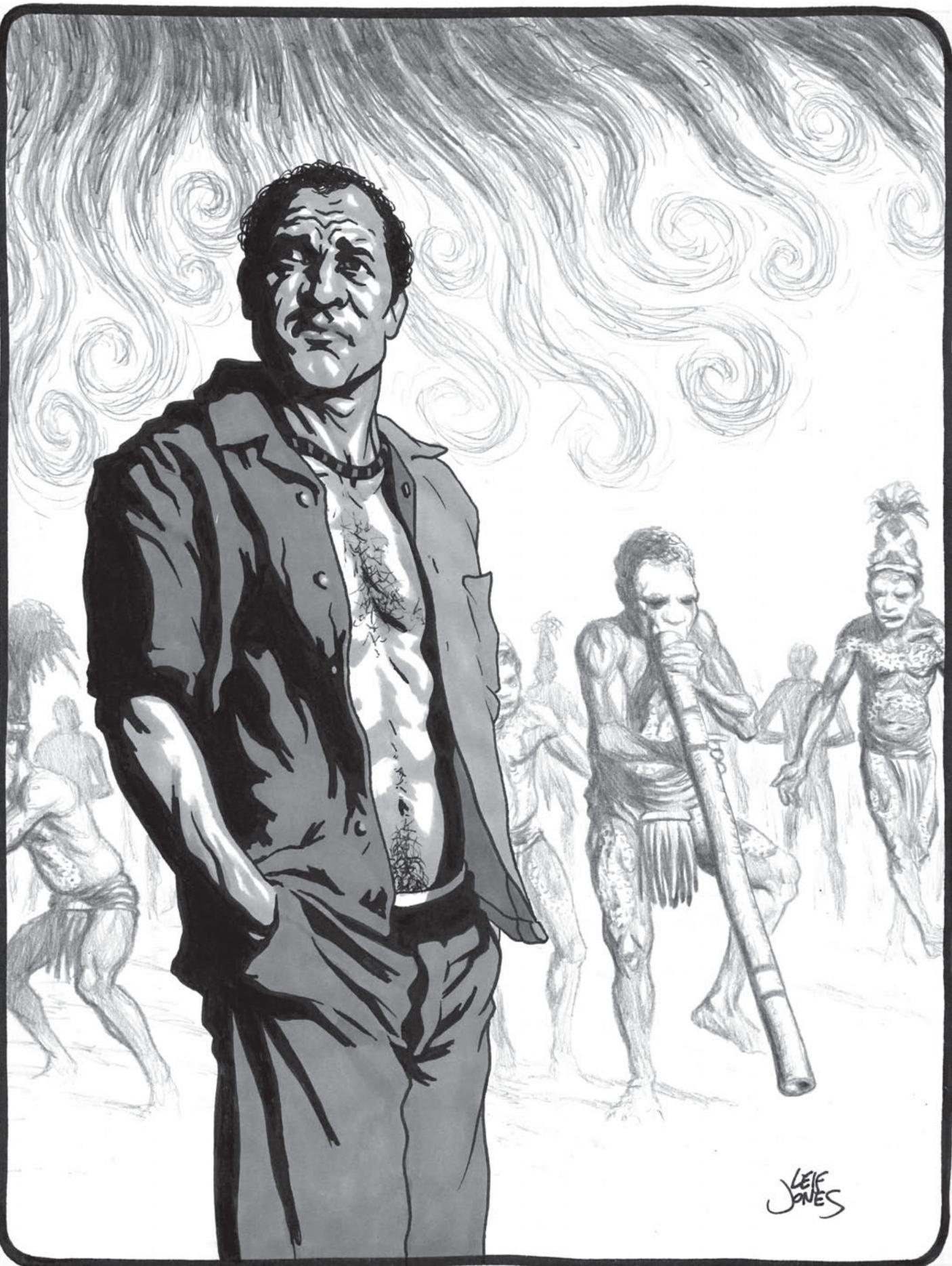
5. The Technocracy, now growing comfortable with its de facto victory over the Traditions, opts to engage in some mop-up work of some of the smaller Crafts, including the few remaining *kahunas* of the South Pacific. The characters are called in on a last ditch effort to save the magical lore of Polynesia. Do they give the Technocracy a more tempting target? Do they engage the Technocracy directly?

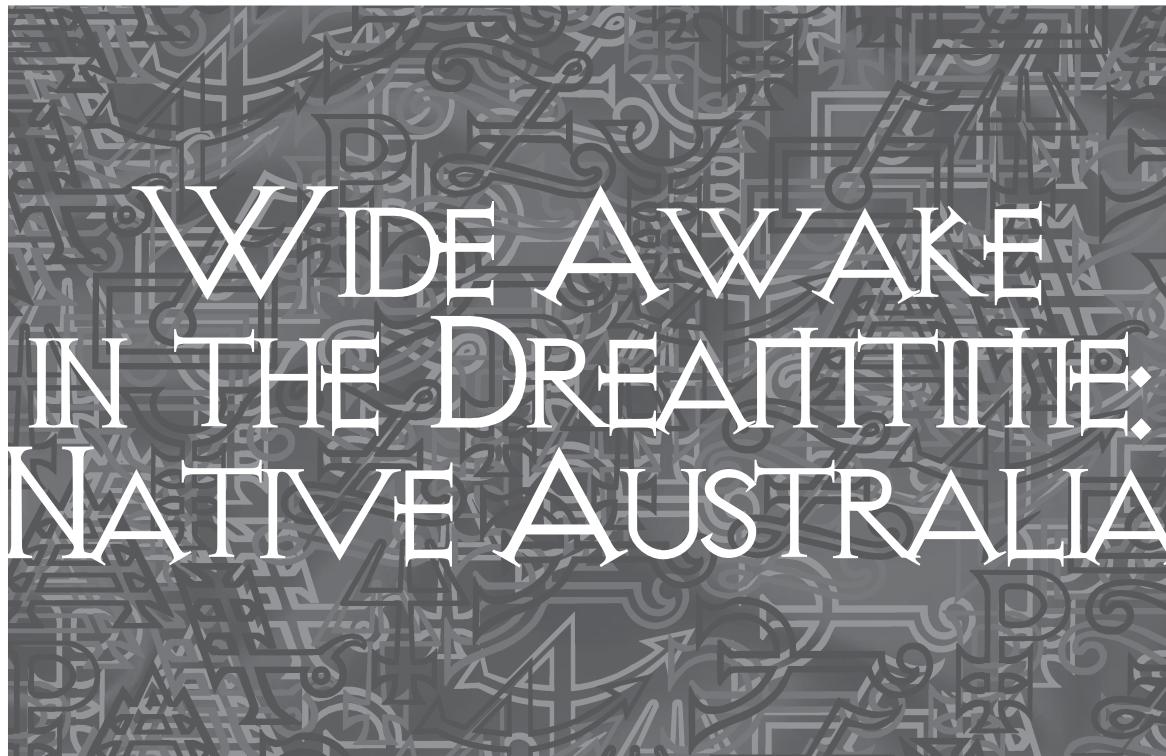
6. An all-*kahuna* game could be a blast and an exotic change of pace if your players are getting tired of the gritty, urban side of the World of Darkness. The mages from around Polynesia all have slightly different approaches to magic. A *kahuna* from Fiji or Hawaii will have a totally different take on magic from a *tohunga* from Ao Te Aroa — at least as different as that of a Verbena and a Euthanatos. After a bit of research, the Storyteller (and perhaps the players) should feel free to design the Polynesian "Traditions." As guidelines, think about what raw materials for magic the islands of the South Pacific offer to the mage: Oceans and volcanoes offer a lot to the prospective student of Forces. Likewise, an island with a heavy shark or octopus population might provide a strong impetus for a mage to learn Mind magic. One of these Polynesian "Traditions" might specialize in storm and volcano magic (Forces); another tradition might be particularly skilled in navigating the ocean and might therefore focus on magical means of getting from island to island (Correspondence); another might focus on working with the local flora and fauna (Life, Mind), while another might emphasize the spirit world and working with tikis (Spirit). The names, specialties and mystical or philosophical underpinnings of

these “Traditions” are up to you and your players, and could serve to take your game into some innovative new places.

7. Another plot link to **Kindred of the East** could connect your game to both Asia and America. The Kuei-jin, the vampires of Asia, are intent on making inroads into North America and they are making great strides in San Francisco, but they are still limited in their war effort by how many Kuei-

jin they can bring over. It would serve them well to have a base of operations somewhere between Asia and North America, and Hawaii (or any other Polynesian archipelago) would serve perfectly. The native *kahunas*, however, might have other ideas. A *kahuna* vs. Kuei-jin chronicle could be a great variant on the more standard mage vs. vampire concept.





MESSAGE FROM: AGENT SPENCER <[validation link here](#)>

TO: SUPERVISOR, ARCHIVE, PROTECTION

RE: Beauvoir Project.

Agent Beauvoir has enjoyed limited success. Attached please find information file:

1 multimedia file (Road Train Footage)

1 transcript of interview

1 intercept of journal entries, decrypted

1 action plan summary and recommendation

Sincerely yrs,

Agent Spencer

MEDIA FILE ATTACHED. Transcript is below.

TIME MARK: -10:04:02

There are no maximum speed limits on certain roads in this part of the world. The Road Train in question, an imported Peterbilt tractor with intermodal containers, was proceeding with all excess speed in high gear, making way north, an hour out of Adelaide.

TIME MARK: - 6:03:05

Driver notes increase in evening fog conditions. Very unusual for the dry climate. No reduction in speed noted by logs.

TIME MARK: -4:23:50

Visibility distance dropping considerably. Road cameras are the only thing keeping the train on the road. The fog is like a wall and driver is clearly fighting vertigo as he struggles to keep the train on track.

TIME MARK: -2:23:45

Interior lights dimmed. Static patterns on tape, in keeping with paranormal activity.

TIME MARK: -0:46:08

Seconds to crossportation, internal audio picks up the driver's curses and a strange wailing sound. Analysis identifies this sound as a native instrument called a didgeridoo. Side view mirrors vibrate from sonic impact.

TIME MARK: +0:03:45

Crossover complete... light with strange blue striations is noted. No further recording input. Truck break-up sounds noted on tape.

TIME MARK: +5:06:02

Glass shattering many minutes after final recording of the crash lends one to believe there may have been human involvement in break-in of the cabin. See evidence tag #345-B.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT: Operative Klein, tech on duty at time of incident

SPENCER: So, Operative... Klein is it?

KLEIN: Yes, Klein. Look, this isn't something I need my lawyer for, is it?

SPENCER: Absolutely not. This isn't a formal investigation. I'm just trying to get a grasp on the situation. You understand... it's not every day this sort of thing happens.

KLEIN: Yeah, I get it. OK.

SPENCER: So, what do you do for us here?

KLEIN: Heh. I guess you could say I'm a geek for the Technocracy. I am the alpha nerd in this part of the world for unconscious indigenous cultural phenomena and the resulting dimensional instabilities.

SPENCER: Yes, I read your thesis on the quantum dissonance in the ruins of Catal Huyuk, and your paper on Ojibwa medicine practices and the resulting hypospacial instabilities concerning them. Very interesting work, Mr. Klein.

KLEIN: Thanks.

SPENCER: But you must have a hard time staying busy in such a specialized field. Is that why you were on watch last night?

KLEIN: Yeah. We... all us fellows... have to have a shift on «the Board,» as we call it, from time to time.

SPENCER: I see. And this "Board" is the front end to the downlink from the Kirlian Imaging Platform?

KLEIN: Yep. We call it the «Ley Eye» around here. Sounds cooler that way.

SPENCER: And you were sitting at the Board, working on the Tessary Distributed Processing project, at the time the Event occurred?

KLEIN: We have to work on the Tessary during all minimal labor sequences that aren't logged for recreation. Besides, it's kind of fun.

SPENCER: Describe for me what happened near 300 hours, please.

KLEIN: I noticed that the Coober Pedy zone's Q-Score was spiking big time, and I began issuing maneuvering orders to the Ley Eye to prosecute.

SPENCER: The Q-Score is a correlation of D-space valences in an area versus the regular normal baseline, correct?

KLEIN: Yeah, it's supposed to show D-space activity in an area. Basically, a long-range Geiger counter for interphasic activity.

SPENCER: Can you explain why the Q-Score logs show a spike building well in advance of the 300 hour mark, and why you didn't make a move to prosecute the intercept before that point?

KLEIN: I, ahh, I...

SPENCER: Is it true that you were hyper-focused on the distributed Tessary patterns and, indeed, competing across the net with some of your peers in the New Delhi Core to solve them?

KLEIN: Look, Ms. Spencer. I won't hide that I didn't have my attention fully on the grid. It's hard to keep focused at the best of times. It's like watching grass grow. And I had silenced the audible alarms because, heck, they go off whenever some miscreant teenage Aboriginal sparks up a blunt, they're so sensitive. But it wasn't that long before I could bring the Ley Eye to bear on the situation... I had it all under control.

SPENCER: Did you notice a change in the phenomenon when the Kirlian Platform finished vectoring?

KLEIN: Actually, no. That was definitely strange. Normally when we bring the ol' Eye online, it really calms Q-Scores down rather quickly. I keep thinking about Schrödinger, ya know, whenever I...

SPENCER: Please just answer the question, Mr. Klein.

KLEIN: Right. Well, the phenomenon's effect diameter actually widened and deepened after we brought the Ley Eye on. Some tremendous negative co-valences, too, as you saw in the data log. I haven't seen anything like it since the Soweto incidents back in the Apartheid era. We're talking some serious crossover energy, some kind of psychogenerative auric propagation with a definitive entropic component.

SPENCER: Yes, indeed. Well, that's good enough, Mr. Klein. I just wanted to show you something on the monitor first. They are pictures of the Mr. Frank Guinn, driver of the road train that was crossported.

KLEIN: Oh my God. He looks like... like half his body melted.... What the hell happened to him?

SPENCER: We're doing everything we can for him, Mr. Klein. I would just hope that, in the future, you will be more careful when you're on the Board. I'm filing this as a reprimand with an advisory that you were clearly earnest during questioning.

KLEIN: Reprimand? Is this going to affect my rotation? I can't stay here for another Session, I'm getting engaged, and....

SPENCER: Be thankful this event doesn't affect you like the crossport affected Mr. Guinn out there. You're the lucky one, Mr. Klein. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go out there and clean up the mess your inattention has caused. Good day.

Dear Xoca,

Greetings from your old friend inside the Technocratic Union. I now know what it means to be on the outside, looking in. It is always a danger when you send someone out into the Outback, you might not ever get them back. That's what happened to me — sent on a mission to investigate the unusual dimensional energies of the desert region of the Northern Territory, I have, as they say, "gone native." Call it a moment of clarity, a realization. Call it a revelation based on my recent experiences.

Truth to tell, ever since I met you, I have harbored thoughts of going native. Never thought I'd actually do it. Normally, I wouldn't be able to cope with the pressure, the chaos, and the pure adrenaline addiction that comes with the territory you traverse daily. But some of the things you said back in that shotgun shack in the Amazon rainforest, back when I was but a wet-behind-the-ears anthropologist and you were a brand-new baby terrorist, both of us trying to wait out the monsoon and having no other place to run, well.... I just want you to know that I haven't forgotten what you said.

The Union trusted me. I got high marks in mental agility and personal boundaries in my Earth Survey Void Engineer orientation and training. Perhaps that is what caused me the most problems: the ability to set boundaries meant that I was firmly able to allow myself to slip deeper and deeper into the Dreamtime while maintaining what I thought was a professional detachment.

I know that, about right now, my friends Angela, Darren and Cori in Internal Security are gearing up to come look for me. They've probably already translocated to the Woomera Proving Grounds station. I know protocol for this. They're going to re-orient the Ley Eye and start looking for prime signatures. They'll find me — I'm not as good at stealth as you are, Xoca.

They won't be long, I'm sure, but at least they're not going to find me with this data connection. I am uploading this using my own kit-bashed dimensional DiMenTor, a nice Van Eck phreaking-based ethereal router with true-random entropic packet-switching technology. It's the most techno I've been for some time — I guess once you do it, you never forget. I am wondering if I shouldn't have set you up with one before now — it would be nice to chat realtime on a secure connection.

Instead, this file and the other data I've managed to pirate off the main box will go into a time-capsule blog encrypted with a 128-bit key, referencing the Rolex time server at Georgia Tech until the time on the capsule matches your time frame. I'm hoping it will do you some good, but maybe all I want is just to be heard.

I don't want anyone to think the Sphinx has compromised me. Of course, it's one of those things. If you think I am, I'm screwed. If I say I'm not, then you won't trust that, anyway. I'm sure they'll be telling the IntSec team about their suspicions tomorrow when they send them out. I assure you, I was not part of the whole Sydney thing. I don't know anything about it. The last thing I want is for a 100 reality-benders to show up in the Outback. I don't even know why I'm even talking about the Sphinx: nothing I say will matter in the long run, anyway. I don't even know why I'm encrypting this thing.

You will probably be able to break the key in about fifteen minutes with that old Quantar 6000 laptop I gave you (if you haven't sold it, or put a bullet through it, or traded it for plastique), but I guess encryption is just habit for me. Or maybe one last shred of self-respect, some fragment of my past life, I don't know. Maybe it's as much a part of my personal ceremony as the ochre, the drone, the Songlines are to the People.

I guess I should talk a little about how I got to this point. No matter how crazy Internal Security thinks I am now, never let it be said that Harrison Beauvoir is stupid. If I have any hope at all of saving myself at this point, I'm going to need all the friends I can get. That means you, in case you were wondering.

So, to start from the beginning: It wasn't difficult for me to get this job. I was somewhat perfect for it. Unlike most Engineers, I have never really been one for otherworldly exploration. Going where none has gone before was ridiculously dangerous and not for me; I guess I just had much more of a self-preservation streak than that.

After my Awakening (which came late at night in the anthro lab, carbon-dating some of the pre-Columbian artifacts I gathered on that Amazon trip, while Prodigil-ed to the gills), and my subsequent recruitment by Dr. Cavall, the boys in Earth Survey discovered that I had a nice social capability coupled with a mind that allowed me to get an Anthropology doctorate from Rutgers by the time I was 24.

Because I had done extensive field studies with Rutger's expert, Dr. Sherer, in the Outback, I was already familiar with some of my operating area. Because I was the star performer on Fitness & Adaptability Tests from IS, I was the golden boy, the next in line, Johnny-on-the-Spot when the Event happened.

You must already know about the Event — everybody does. Strange dimensional storms have wracked the D-space barrier since then, and we lost a great many people to it. Outposts were destroyed, transdimensional travel ground to a halt. Even our dimensional cartography satellites were harmed by the backlash.

We had crappy response from the Ley Eye since the Event, but we do know this about the Oceania sector: what the Event did was cause a major setback in the dimensional research we were doing on the Outback areas. Suddenly, we were picking up Kirlian resonance in areas where there weren't any people, and where baseline data showed absolutely no activity for decades. We were picking up meta-particle transfer, we were even hearing reports of D-space bleedover events.

Then it happened, a Class One Incident. An entire road train vanished into a very peculiar fog one Sunday morning as it rocketed along the road from Adelaide to Coober Pedy. Road trains don't just vanish, and when they do, it's big, big news. Angela from IS found the driver (shaken, freaked out, easily mind-wiped and re-educated) in the tractor, but there was no sign of the trailers. Though there is rail service now between Adelaide and Alice Springs, the road trains still play a vital role in keeping the Outback supplied with essentials; they're vital to the survival of several outstations in the bush. Without them, places like Coober Pedy would dry up and blow away.

My friend Annie in Continuity was in charge of the clean-up on that one, but I got to watch the operation as I was running recon from the road site. They had to wake up a bunch of guys from Encino, have the Syndics requisition replacement cargo and a replacement road train, and load the damn thing by hand. We had approximately six hours to get this accomplished.

Have you ever seen 20 rear-echelon, uniformed, couch-potato Engineers loading slabs and kegs of beer, cases of rotgut Jim Beam, and a couple of metric tons of flour and sugar and even a small tub of Vegemite — of all things — into a huge, 32-wheel tractor-trailer road train? It's not a pretty sight. I'd have left out the Vegemite, myself. Nasty stuff.

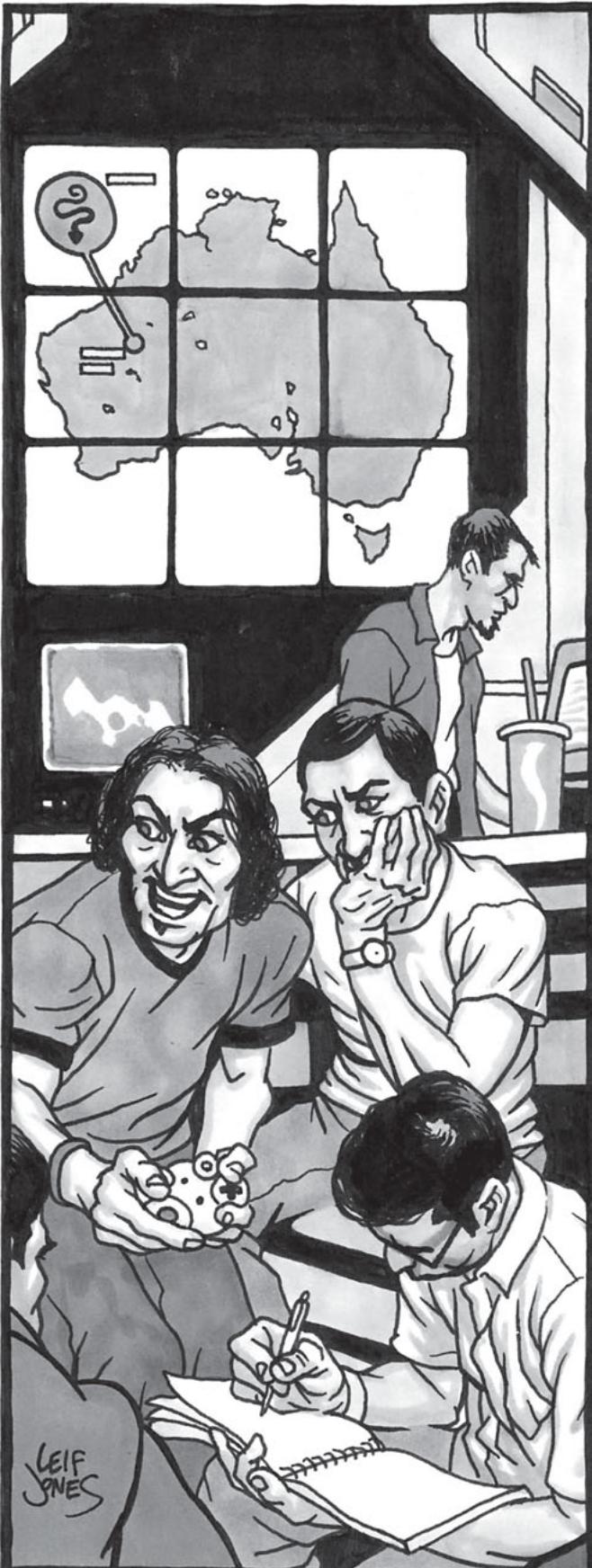
Consensus was with us, or it would've been hell to translocate that beast all the way we did. Chalk up another tremendous success for Continuity, and a trip to the Static Farm for Annie, unfortunately. I meant to send her a video to wish her a speedy recovery, but I remembered that the Static Farm doesn't even have a D-phone.

And I had other work to do. All this weird activity meant that either the Event had exacerbated already weak D-space boundaries, causing breakthroughs and random rifts, or we had some Deviants, some random elements, out there in the vast bush, scratching the skin of and poking holes into our precious Consensus's psychic tissue paper. Klein from D-space Cartography was investigating the former, and it was my job, in Social Engineering, to deal with the latter. No worries, it's what I do.

My equipment, at least, was nice Engineer's issue: water reclaimer, inertial tracker/mapper, satlink, thermocline reflector. All ruggedized, miniature, built-in normalizers, nothing to spook the Masses. Not far from Woomera, at a roadhouse called Johannon's, I was introduced to my Aboriginal guide, a fellow by the name of Uncle Martin Standing. Martin was an older Aboriginal man who appeared relatively assimilated into the culture in Victoria. He believed I was an anthropologist with Australian National University, specializing in Aboriginal culture. Indeed, the Syndics made certain that, the week before, a grant application had been approved in my name: I knew this because the Postie brought me my expense card not long after. Funny thing is, though my name is on it (and my signature), I still haven't read the thing. I guess I won't have to, now.

I put a rented campervan and basic travel supplies on the expense card and we headed into the Outback. It wasn't long before I was driving over Norman B. Tindale's footsteps. Tindale was possibly an Engineer, I don't know for certain. I know he definitely worked with elements of Cryptoanalysis with the USA during WWII, so he could have been recruited then. His driving goal was to map the hidden topography of culture, language, and Aboriginal spirituality in Australia.

Somehow, Tindale got himself initiated with a skin-name, which let him have access to Aboriginal territory that no other researcher had ever visited. His



giant map of the country, with all the tribal language codes and locations posted, is legendary among the Terrestrial Engineers who are D-space map geeks. OK, so he didn't exactly get very many details filled in: he was a broad-brush-stroke kind of guy. He drew the big map. We get to color it in, as long as we make sure we stay inside the lines.

People have often wondered why Tindale was so driven to research this particular topic. It certainly didn't win him much accord back then: people were quite dismayed at his tendency to point out that Aboriginal territorial lines actually ran along certain borders of certain states, rather than what was considered politically correct at the time. I'm sure his colleagues of the day were quite privately disgusted with his willingness to spend nearly every one of his personal sabbaticals traipsing through the bush, eating bush tucker, and speaking as much of the lingo as he could.

Despite his controversial nature when he was younger, eventually Tindale was honored by the mainstream Australian educational edifice, and later by the government itself. Although at first we thought that Tindale's work would allow us access to what is perhaps the oldest indigenous population in the world and their sublimated native discourse on D-space theory (which is the whole reason we have Engineer anthropologists examining the Mayan ruins, and Stonehenge, for example). Finally, a rational basis upon which to study this vast wellspring of irrational shamanistic claptrap!

But it was just not to be. Tindale managed to record everything about the native people of Australia except the truth of their power, the reality of their non-rational, pre-verbal quantum dimensional experimentation. We had long suspected elements of the Opposition working among them, but had not been able to finalize those suspicions. There were those of us who had suspected that Tindale was hiding something, a hidden agenda perhaps or a secret alliance with some sort of Reality Deviant, because he never once allowed any of his work to be translated into a digital format while he was still alive. It was only his academic successors (with helpful grants from our Union) who moved ahead with that particular project.

To fill in the gaps left behind by "Tinny," as I've come to call him, we needed a survey mission. What was needed were trips along the same lines as Tindale's, but instead of moving rapidly from place to place, each individual area would need to be observed and catalogued in vast detail. The prescription? One Engineer, in deep cover, a flexible social Engineer who could go to the and blend in with local custom. Then, this Engineer would proceed to make a detailed record and on-the-spot analysis. The ultimate goal would be, if possible, total assimilation of the techniques of the mysterious local dimensional control these natives seemed to possess. Even before the Event, we had trouble tracking the dimensional valences generated by these psycho-cultural activities. Like the ghosts of New York City on our psidar, they faded out just as quickly as they arrived. It was determined that the only way to truly observe them reliably would be on the scene, in the field, with nothing between the scientist and the science.

Now, well after the Dimensional Space Event, we have more of a need to know. In this place, far away from the Consensus, this lonely uninhabited stretch of nothingness, there may be answers. Could there some sort of hyper-fractal safe harbor, a dimensional backwater we could use to access the vastness of D-space once again, without the transdimensional ontological stress and shredding quantum friction of the Storm Effect?

MARTIN, KING OF THE DESERT

It was shortly after the road train incident that my dream project was given a big green light. This is what led me to my trip cross country in a camper van with one of the most garrulous Aborigines I've ever met. Uncle Martin, with an extroverted personality completely opposite his laconic Aboriginal kinfolk, was more than willing to tell me anything I wanted to know as long as I kept him supplied with beer and burgers. My read on him was that he was quite happy to be riding, not walking, across the bush and that he enjoyed the questions I posed for him. Of course he did. I was an expert in asking good questions, wasn't I?

From my own studies, and from the answers to questions that Martin gave, I came to know much about the native land and its power. The reality shaping (what Martin called *wunggud* business, magic, if you will) of the People is as varied as the hundreds of languages that they speak. There is no way any one person, unenhanced, could fully comprehend the length, width, depth, and temporal dimension of an attempt to make apparent and clear the entire *wunggud* system in all its complexity. Because of this, we are reduced to categorizing and generalizing. We commit the extra-territorial sin of oversimplification, just as Tindale did. At least I got the spelling of the tribal names right; that's more than he did.

One could better approach the topic, in a more specific way, by dropping the reader off a few miles in any direction away from Uluru, in the center of the Outback, and merely wait for the nature of the Aboriginal people to take its course. If you're worthy of the wisdom, you will survive. If not, you'll be swallowed up by the desert and by the Dreamborn.

This approach, however, is not practical, nor is it desirable to most. Following, then, is my attempt at rationalizing what cannot be made rational. This is my try at explaining the mystery of this power to one who has not stood on the sand and looked into the eyes of the Ancestors. You cannot know what it is to be accepted by, touch, shape, and move through the Dreamtime. I am just now coming to understand the sheer foreign nature of my mind before that acceptance.

Although the camper van was well-stocked, and Uncle Martin was thoroughly lubricated with beer and cheese dip, I began to get the feeling, as we crawled across the vast landscape (the road seeming to vanish in the heat), that I was being conned. Usually my senses are pretty good about such things, and I had a gut feeling it was so. Checking my sensors, I noted no dimensional energy, no valences; the world was as dead-dull normal as it should be. We traveled on and on, passing road trains and tourists, moving through an eternal landscape at our top speed, there being no speed limits on the roads.

"What good is the Dreaming if we can't see it or touch it?" I asked Martin, trying to draw him out.

"Dreamtime is always there. Whitefellas, they can't see it alla time. You gotta know, we go through the *Wuudu* time, to get to Men's Business. You gotta know, we are kin to the Ancestors who sleep. That is how we see, that is how we know." Martin looked apologetic. "Whitefellas got no Dreaming. Whitefellas not part of *Wurnan*, not part of *Wunguud* law."

"What about the one called Tinsdale? He had a skin-name?"

"Tinsdale was no Uncle to me! He was whitefella; he tricked the Northern People to get his skin-name. We honor it, to preserve peace with the Ancestors there. Ancestor Snake, he would come and eat us if we offer him disrespect."

It was clear to me that I wasn't going to get very far by asking Martin questions. I asked him to take me to his home, to the Beverly Springs outstation where he grew up. There was a lot of conversation in a language I had not yet sleep-learned when we arrived, but when I brought out beer, it seemed to speak Martin's family's language. It was arranged that we would stay with his family for a time. The camper van was like a silver sausage parked on their land. This was where I would establish my baseline, and begin interviewing. For about four weeks I interviewed all the elders of the local enclave, and I traveled a bit over to Drysdale, Gibb River, and Mt. Elizabeth to talk to their people, too. My questions earned me a lot of attention. After a while, "elders" were appearing out of nowhere to talk to me, telling me that I need to talk to them and hear their story.

I made a mistake one night after we arrived. I turned from my monitor to see Martin standing there, his eyes wide, his face clearly conveying unadulterated shock.

While transcribing some of the conversations from my digital recorder, I had left audio on, to review the notes as they were being voice-recognized. Martin had, unbeknownst to me, snuck into the camper van and was having a nap. The sound of the replaying interview woke him. Because of the indigenous people's difficulty with being recorded in any way, shape, or form, I had taken the liberty of concealing the tiny but powerful microphone that transmitted wirelessly to my digital recorder. I didn't really think it was something I should bring up to all the Elders I spoke to. But my sloppiness in not examining the back of the van was what caused me the worst problem. Martin knew I had recorded them.

He stood there for some time, silent, and I pressed the "hold" key on the recognizer software. "Martin, I didn't know you were there."

He nodded, and turned, and walked out. I expected that he would return quickly with the Aboriginal equivalent of the police, but he did not.

The next day, despite certain dimensional stabilizers built in to my equipment, the laptop I had been using refused to boot. Using all of my limited computer knowledge, I was able to determine that something akin to an electromagnetic pulse had totally blanked the drive. Thank goodness I had already uploaded the audio and text transcription to the VoidNet! All in all, I lost only a day's worth of data.

Then my dreaded consequences came. I was summoned to a meeting with the Elders. They wanted to talk to me. They told me to bring my ghost-box, the name they used to refer to the computer carrying case I usually had with me. I brought it with me. An Aboriginal woman and a man who looked like a warrior or a guardian met me outside the Elder's hut. It was a ramshackle thing, made out of a broken-down old camper van split open as if a giant can opener had been used on it. A tarp was flung over the holes in the van, so that it formed a makeshift tent. The overall effect was a fairly large cave-like interior with two flaps for entrances. The woman in front had an incense pot and was using a feather to fan smoke over me. "Take off your clothes," she said, and started tugging at my khakis and the cotton bush-shirt I wore for comfort.

There was very little nudity taboo in this encampment, and I recognized the ceremony as some kind of cleansing process. Perhaps I was to be ritually cleansed before presenting myself to the Elders. I knew then that the only way

I would ever win these people's trust was to go along with the ceremony. So, I shucked off my clothes and placed them in the basket that the old woman had placed at my feet. There was a fire nearby and she walked over to the fire and tossed a handful of the same incense into it. She was smiling and humming a drone while she did this, looking straight into my eyes. I nodded as she cleansed my equipment with the holy smoke. I didn't think it would hurt.

Then she upended the case and all that was in it into the flames. She followed suit with all my clothing, even my socks and shoes. I watched as my devices, each small, vital, useful thing that I had with me, caught fire as their normalization kicked in. No matter how weak the Consensus was out in this desert, I knew that I was glad for the auto-normal mode, glad that these tiny miracles of science would soon be ash instead of just sitting there miraculously.

The clothes were no problem: I had more. The shoes, they were a serious problem. They were specially made hiking boots that supposedly would enable me to walk about three times farther than I would be able to normally. And now they were toast.

I struggled with my emotions, struggled to maintain myself. This had all the seeming of a test, and it was a test I wanted to succeed. I looked around and saw that someone, Martin perhaps, had driven off in the camper van. There were no other vehicles at the outstation, and we were away from the outside world. There was nothing but bush for miles.

"Go in, go in." The woman said, smiling as she stirred the coals. The guard had opened the door to the Elder Hut, and I went in.

I didn't need a d-meter to know strange energies were at work inside the hut; I could feel them all around me. There was some kind of entropic catch-field, promulgating itself inside the drone of the noise of the didgeridoos, but I couldn't identify it. Looking back and forth across the hut, I could tell that the Elders were talking to each other, mind-to-mind. I've never been too good with intuition and telepathic interception, but I tried to tune into them anyway. All I got for my trouble was a splitting headache.

The oldest among them was painted in white, which was a good sign. White was about understanding, seeing clearly. I was waiting for him to speak as he stood in front of me, listening to the drone and to the breathing of the others in the hut. He cast lots on the sand floor, and picked through them, reading them. A precognition aid, obviously. I had read about the kola-nut divination systems of the Yoruba people in Africa, but I hadn't investigated this particular symbol-set yet.

"You go walkabout. You find what you seek. We wait for you," the old man said. It wasn't a question.

"Yes, I am... on walkabout. I am trying to know the People better."

Martin stepped out of the darkness. "You want to know *Wunguud*, you ask about *Wunguud*. Listen to the Law Man, you will go walkabout. They will walk with you."

Suddenly I was surrounded by a group of young Aboriginals, with strong, wise eyes. "Is only way. You cannot go back now." Martin said, holding the flap on the hut open, to the blinding sunlight beyond. I swallowed and nodded, and walked out of the hut and into my next life.

NOT A DROP TO DRINK

We have gone for many days now without food, without water. Days ago, after weeks in the bush, Red Hunter came to me and told me that I was to lead the People that day. With the People's healer I had managed to heal the sores on my bare feet, and stave off the worst of the sunburn and heat damage. My addiction to water was waning, and now I could live with only the few sips they gave me every day. I had been listening to the concerts, the Songlines every evening, listening to the sounds of the People celebrating their existence and their wisdom. I was amazed at how the People could find food and water anywhere they wanted: I kept looking for some evidence of power, some sign that they were using magical energies to find these things, or create them. But I could find none. They simply walked to a place, and there was food there. They found water in the strangest places, places that looked outwardly dry but were revealed by many subtle signs.

Slowly, over the course of days, I have been giving up my old mental Engineer's constructs. After the sandstorm, I gave up my inner map: it was useless, anyway. The Handbook, of course, I had to release upon making the decision to return to the People after I tried to escape: the Handbook would have it no other way. Now, even my Discretion Shell, the persona I keep to protect me from other people sensing my thoughts, is starting to dissolve. I cannot remember the thought-paths that allow me to keep it working, and I know that it will unravel shortly if I do not remember. I only have the Journal now, that eidetic memory loop that is allowing me to "write" all of these words. I hope that the Dreaming will let me keep the Journal. I don't want to forget who I was, who I am, what I have done.

When Red Hunter told me to lead, I said, "I cannot lead. I do not know how to find food, or water."

Red Hunter nodded, smiling. "You will find them."

"I have no idea, really. Someone else should lead until I learn."

"We will depend on you. Lead."

He believed in me, and he was adamant: I was leading. The People fell into line behind me as I walked across the bush. The skin that I had been given protected me from the worst of the burning wind, but not much.

That was many days ago. Each night as we made camp, the People shared their food with me, shared their water. But the water supply was now almost non-existent. The food had long gone. Now, we were all hungry, starving, walking through the bush aimlessly. I tried to reach out with my inner knowledge, the Engineer's knowledge, and locate water. It was impossible. The sand did not stir, the land around me was blank. There was nothing. I felt as though I became one of the Gilguled, someone without Will or Power. These native people had stolen my Facility, taken the power within me. I was doomed to be one of the Masses, now! If I had not been so incredibly hungry and incredibly thirsty, I would've hated them, I was so angry.

Every night when we halted after a long, hot, dry march through the bush, the mob would play their music. I would collapse from exhaustion and just lay back and look up at the stars. The stars, looking down on me, taunting me as if to say, "You should be up here. You shouldn't be down there, where you'll become part of the base dust."

Then one day we got up early with the Sun-Woman's daughter. I felt mocked by the dry creek bed that we were following, as if the land itself was saying, "You could have water... if you were only smart enough to find it." All my degrees, all my knowledge could not find for me that which the mob and I needed most: water.

I began to hear the mob singing and playing music behind me, but I was too exhausted to turn around. I stumbled down a ravine and fell, face-forward, in the sand. I was ready to die, then. I knew that it wouldn't be much longer before the Sun-Woman's daughter came to take me away. I could feel the mob standing around me, watching me, wondering what I would do next. If I died here, would they lay down with me and die also? It seemed that way from their absolute faith in me.

I started to wave them off, wave them away. My hand brushed up through the sand, and I pointed at them to go.

Uncle Martin nodded back to me, smiling with that gap-toothed grin of his. "Yes. You bin fine. You find water."

I looked down at my hand. It was wet, caked with drenched sand under the dust of the dry creek. The world swam by my eyes as I lost it.

I woke up many hours later, and noticed for the first time that Red Hunter, Turtle Carries, and Joan Carver were all different somehow. Somewhere in my body, training began to take over. My Potential woke up and began to do a Dimensional Scan, noting all of the reality deviations in the area. The three elders of the mob were glowing, tagged as Deviants. I could see several minor free-roaming ectoplasmic entities swirling around them. Joan handed me some water out of her cupped hands, and I drank deep, drinking in even the grit and the sand. It was the best thing I had ever consumed.

"Why were you all singing and playing behind me? Weren't you tired, too?" I asked when I could speak again.

Red Hunter grinned and shook his head. "We bin walkabout with you. We not play."

"No playing?"

Uncle Martin shook his head "no." "We quiet. You hear playing?"

I nodded to them. "Yes."

"Songlines of the Dreaming, you hear." Martin said, and patted me on the cheek. "You one of us now. This is taboo time for you, a time of fasting and reserve. Your Dreamtime Ancestor, or Totem, is very important to you. You must never eat it or hunt it. It describes the lands you can gather food in, walk about in. Wallanganda, the Great Creator, gave the Dreamborn so that we would have no reason to fight for land or food like the whitefellas.

"And how do I know what my Dreamborn is? I am not born of the People."

"You will find your way. The Old Ones have arranged it. You will need be accepted. You will need be introduced. Then you find your Dreamborn."

"I see. And when will this happen?"

Martin grinned. "We go today, to old Movie Place."

I thought he meant that we'd be going to a cave or some such that he called the "old movie place."

Instead, the mob walked deep into the Outback, and it wasn't long before we saw a strange square on the horizon, looming up for miles around. It wasn't long before I discovered what it was: an abandoned movie screen, huge against the desert sky. Out in the middle of nowhere. Drive-in movies were popular in this part of the world, I knew. But I never expected to find one deep in the Outback.

The struts were rusted, but the screen somehow remained in one piece, and scrupulously white. There were no other buildings still standing, but somehow the engineering marvel of the screen remained.

"You like Movie?" Joan asked when she offered me water and a bush tomato for dinner.

"It's amazing. Why did we come here and not some place where there are initiations? A cave or rock place with paintings and ochre?"

"You whitefella. You get whitefella initiation. The men use Movie for you."

The women finished handing out the food and they were gone just as soon as they had arrived. I never understood how they could do that — literally vanish into the desert without so much as a ripple of Potential.

The men had already made a fairly large bonfire and were beginning to sing as they worked, smearing each other with red ochre they had produced from packs. I watched as they came toward me and began to paint my body roughly, determined, their eyes wide and their mouths set in a grim line.

As I watched, the shadows on the wide, white screen grew. The colors from the fire splashed and changed. It seemed as if there was some serpentine movement winding its way across the vast white expanse of the screen, coiled and pulsing like blood in a vein. I reached up to touch the pulsing snake. Incongruously, I was able to feel the scales of the invisible creature as it twined around my hand and then around my body, covering me in iridescence. I felt accepted, claimed, marked as one of the People. This must be what it feels like to be initiated.

And that, my Xoca, is where I turned. That is where I left behind the dreams of the Union for the Dreamtime of the People. Looking back on it, it seems such a simple thing. *LEIF JONES* The Elders have told me that I was sent to them for a purpose. That I brought great danger to them and to myself, but there are important truths that I must bring back with me. I will let you know all that I know, Xoca, because I know you will keep the wonder, the majesty of these people sacred. And that is what I wish now.



THE GREAT SOUTHERN LAND



Australia is a unique land, a living mural of diversity, mystery, and contrasts. Australia possesses the wealth and prestige of a European country, but its proximity to the Pacific means it is as much affected by Indonesia, China, Japan, and Oceania as the USA is affected by Canada and Mexico.

70,000 years ago, people came to Australia for the first time. It is theorized, based on language analysis, that these people all once shared common bond, or at the very least, a common language. There are over 600 Aboriginal languages documented today. What caused this Tower of Babel-style proliferation of new tongues? Perhaps it was the nomadic lifestyle of the people, combined with the special inter-relationships the various tribes evolved over time to ensure genetic diversity. Perhaps it was due to the fact that the People refuse to use words associated with taboo subjects, so any time something was declared taboo, new words had to be created to describe it.

Later, in 1788, the European settlers came. When the American Revolutionary War made it impractical for Britain to continue its practice of forcibly exporting criminals from its shores to America, Australia proved to be a wonderful alternative. In addition to being a seemingly vast land, it also appeared to be much more harsh, climactically, than North America.

Science tells us that Australia has never had a truly indigenous people. But certainly, those who have made their home in the land for 70,000 years feel that they have a much better claim on it than those who have been in Australia a mere 200 years or so. There are some legends among the Aborigines that speak of dingo-, lightning-, snake-, kangaroo-, and crocodile-men, but these have not been independently verified.

Despite the Aborigines' seniority in tenancy, the European settlers and their descendants certainly have made their claim stick over that of the Aborigines. Like the American Indians, the Aborigines soon found that white men tended to want to run them off their lands, especially where there were precious natural resources to be taken. The whitefellas poisoned billabongs and infected the People with smallpox to reduce their numbers, before the People were forcibly removed from their traditional lands and required to "assimilate" with whitefella culture. Today, the Aborigines are winning back their lands in the court system.

Many Aborigines, on the other hand, have slid into a mire of despondency and have turned away from their traditional cultural beliefs. It could perhaps be argued that this, too, is the fault of the Europeans. To a certain extent, the Europeans will agree that they have wronged the Aborigines, but draw the line at taking responsibility for the People's current state of affairs.

Certainly, the Australian dominant culture has done much, much more for its «indigenous» people than the United States has done for its Native Americans: national monuments have been renamed, native title has been restored in some instances, Aboriginal spirituality and beliefs have been accommodated in police investigations and funeral practices. Large-scale attempts to educate the European-descended Australians in cultural sensitivity towards their Aboriginal countrymen have been made. Whole areas of Outback have been designated as Aborigine-ruled zones, with their own autonomy and local control. Though it is a thorn in the side of the government, there is even an Aboriginal capitol tent compound erected on the lawn of the Australian Capitol!

Still, there are those who would see these reforms erased and the old ways put back. They'd rather call Uluru «Ayers Rock.» Unlike the United States, where «Native American» is considered «cool» and used to sell baseball games, cars, motorcycles, soap, and expensive handicrafts, the European descendants of Australia don't have much to do with Aboriginal culture.

After years of struggling with its unique identity, Australia has settled down into two cultures occupying the same landscape: the European-based culture around the ocean-kissed edges of the continent, and the Aboriginal culture in the great sandy middle. Both cultures are Australian. This division is representative of a magical aspect of Australia: spiritually, it is literally a land of two separate, but connected, worlds.

COLONIZATION

Australia has always been a hotly contested land, ever since the "Great Southern Land" was discovered. It all began with a pirate. William Dampier, an English pirate and explorer, was one of the first Europeans to chart part of the coast that would one day be called Australia. This discovery later led to Captain James Cook's more in-depth explorations. Unfortunately, Dampier had to return to port before much more exploration, as his crew was limited by the debilitating condition known as scurvy.

For his mission, Captain James Cook equipped a ship called *Endeavour* to take him farther than he'd ever been before. On this ship, Cook was able to utilize refined navigational techniques that allowed him both to better stay on course and to chart land masses in a way that created a usable map for a safe journey home.

Cook defeated scurvy by keeping a close eye on the crew's food supply and making certain they got enough of the proper nutrients to ward off the ailment. Cook sailed up the eastern coast of Australia in the year 1770, round Cape York, and landed at Botany Bay.

Although natives there at the time initially warned him off and asked him to leave, they assisted him in finding water

to replenish his stores. Once he was alone, he planted the British flag in the soil and claimed the continent for England and named the land as "New South Wales."

The strategic and cultural ramifications of this act were not felt for a few years. Australia was well positioned to be a valuable port of call for British ships traveling the Indian and Pacific Ocean. Though there were other, shorter, routes to take, the Dutch controlled these routes. England feared war with the Dutch as a result. England needed a new source of shipbuilding supplies as well. Cook's Australia seemed perfect to address these difficulties.

The crime rate in England soared when the American Revolutionary War began, because the Colonies could no longer be a dumping ground for criminals. Giant ship-jails called «Prison Hulks» were moored in British harbors. Land-based jails were tremendously overcrowded. Something had to be done. Sir Joseph Banks, a naturalist onboard Cook's survey voyage of the *Endeavour*, suggested that the new land would make an excellent place to start a penal colony. His suggestion led to the establishment of the First Fleet, which left from England to cross the Pacific. The leader of the expedition declared Botany Bay unsuitable and landed to the north of that location, where they established camp. The tiny colony was named Sydney after the Viscount Sidney, the British Secretary of State who commissioned the voyage.

Life was very tough for the criminals forced to immigrate to Australia. Not only were the crops poor, the ground was unsuitable for farming — as far as the English were concerned. In addition to that, Pemulwuy, the Rainbow Warrior, an Aboriginal war leader and resistance fighter, lead ambushes and attacks against the colonists, for they had invaded the territory with which his tribe had long been entrusted. There was only one woman for every four men in that time. Farming was so bad that the colony very nearly starved to death. There was no Thanksgiving, no saving grace by the native people to carry them through.

Absent their convenient American dumping ground, the English had begun characterizing the Great Southern Land as being a terrible place, a place where one should send criminals. As the economic situation in England worsened, the government changed its tack and began to try and convince subjects to immigrate to Australia. The people who were most desirable were skilled craftsmen and professionals, people who could help build and secure the colony.

For these skilled workers, the Crown offered a subsidized passage on a ship to Australia. This subsidized passage was little more than steerage. The cramped, unhealthy conditions meant passengers arrived in ill health. Many died in the crossing.

Those who did make the crossing safely found large tracts of land just waiting to be claimed. Heedless of Aboriginal resistance, these free settlers decided to hunker down to defend their new lands against all comers. These «squatters,» as they were called, were to later become extremely wealthy individuals in the future of Australia as a result of their tremendous land-based resources.

Gold and other valuable minerals created boomtowns and drew prospectors to Australia. Mining became a major focus of activity, especially in the west. Gold, opal, and uranium mining all had their booms and busts.

Because of Australia's prominence in World War II, refugees have been arriving since, starting in earnest in 1945 when the government took steps to increase immigration. The most recent refugees come from New Zealand, where comparatively easy entrance restrictions mean that South-east Asians immigrate there and then move to the Australian coast. Today, Australia is an extremely multi-cultural, international country. The political struggles and economic forces at work between the descendants of European settlers and Aboriginal people (and those who have intermarried) are really not part of this work. Suffice it to say that, like any huge social problem, it has many different sides and you should spend some time researching it if you wish to run a long-term chronicle in Australia. In order to give you a working knowledge of the Aboriginal side of history, you will have to see things through their eyes.

THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE

It is theorized that the Aboriginal people crossed a land bridge of sorts from what is commonly referred to in geographic theory as "PanGaea," the large mega-continent that existed in pre-history.

Evolutionary theory states that this is the only explanation for the existence of Aborigines in this land, but the Aborigines know their own creation story quite well, and claim that they are descendants of the Early Ones, the Dreamtime Ancestors, given human form as a boon for being continuously loyal to their Elders. As a result, it is Aboriginal humanity's job to take care of, and keep sacred, the lands they were assigned. This spiritual principle of custodial bonds to the land put them at immediate odds with the European incomers, whose ideas of territoriality were much different.

The policies of the Australian government towards the Aboriginal people have changed over the years. The oldest ideas centered around the concepts of "terra nullius," or "blank land." "Terra nullius" meant that nobody owned the land of Australia before colonization. Therefore, Aborigines had no claim to title of the land and the colonists could take what they liked, pushing Aboriginal people off their land as they wished (just as happened in North America).

Later came the social Darwinist idea of "natural selection," which said that, because the European settlers' culture was intrinsically more advanced and civilized, it would naturally edge out the Aboriginal culture. Because of this policy, the Aboriginal population dropped to around 50,000 individuals.

In response came the wave of church missions and the idea that Aboriginal people could somehow be assimilated into the Eurocentric culture of the white Australian people. Unfortu-

nately, this policy took the native people out of their cultural context, out of the lands with which they were familiar, and attempted to force them into the mold of the proper citizen of the Commonwealth. In some cases it worked and the Aborigines joined society. In others, it failed miserably.

Those who were taken from their lands were considered to be lost. This practice held sway for so long that those People who were taken are considered “The Stolen Generation,” although the practice continued for longer than a generation.

This process of attempting to “civilize” these people has been blamed for rampant poverty, epidemic drug abuse (including alcoholism), and widespread homelessness among the Aboriginal population. Finally, out of the assimilation movement, a self-reliance movement emerged which eventually blossomed into the self-government movement, and the idea of native title came into play.

In 1992, the Mabo decision of the High Court of Australia recognized the prior claim of Aboriginal Australians. Today, many Aboriginal family groups are trying to reclaim

their native title to lands that have been taken over by European descendants, and some are succeeding. Definitely, the movement towards allowing the remaining Aboriginal tribes their land and allowing them to shepherd and protect their native title has meant that traditional culture and practice has been able to thrive again.

Up until the Reckoning, Australia was largely ignored by the vast majority of mages, both Technocratic and Traditional, because of its supposed magical barrenness and the perception that, were there any magical secrets to be had, the Dreamspeakers had them sewn up. The Void Engineers are perilously close to breaking the Kirlian “code” for the Dreamtime. Using grid computing techniques, they will no doubt discover the D-space wavelength they have been seeking for some time. When that happens, they will surely seek to “discover,” catalog, survey, and report on the Dreamtime. But for now, at least, Australia is hardly magically barren. Its secrets, however, are not for everyone.

AUSTRALIA'S MAGIC



The magic of Australia is as varied as the 700 languages the Aboriginal peoples once spoke. The power that flows through the land is still great, even though centuries have dulled its luster, and technology and modern-day advances have slowed its growth; the power remains, embedded in the very land. Indeed, the power is the land — sleeping gods are mountains, the lightning dances along with the People, and from under a rock, a Dreamborn ancestor watches in the form of a lizard, unseen. There is no part of the Outback that is not touched with the myth and truth of Dreamtime power.

WHAT IS THE DREAMTIME?

The Dreamtime is a rare kind of spirit phenomenon, a very large, semi-sentient, flexible and polymorphic Shallow Realm. Before the Shattering and the Technocratic Paradigm, the first shamans in Australia sought to create just such a Shallowing as a home and haven for their Dreamborn kin, by anchoring a spiritual territory so closely with its material counterpart that there would be very little difference between the two. They thereby created the Songlines of the Dreamtime. They remain, albeit diminished, among the greatest achievements of human magic in history, a lasting testimony to those ancient People.

Using his Spirit magic and drawing on the strength of his familiarity with the Dreamtime, a shaman can then easily pass back and forth from common Australia to the Dreamtime, and back again, enjoying the benefits of both realms without experiencing the Avatar Storm at all. The other benefits and corresponding consequences for becoming familiar with the Dreamtime are listed in *Initiation Benefits*, below.

WHERE IS THE DREAMTIME?

The Dreamtime stretches the length and breadth of Australia, and extends even to islands in the Torres Strait and other close landmasses where Aboriginal people have immigrated, and where Dreamborn still sleep. Although some mages have theorized that such a feat of magic could be duplicated elsewhere, it is not considered possible under the present Technocratic paradigm.

WHAT THE DREAMTIME IS NOT

The Dreamtime is most definitely not the Umbra itself, although the stars located high in the Dreamtime night sky are thought to be portals into the Near Umbra. The difference between the Dreaming, which is the source of Fae power, and the Dreamtime needs to be explained: The Dreaming flows through Australia; the world's imagination has been captured by those myth-stories that resonate throughout the land down under. But the Dreaming is not the Dreamtime. Think of them as two different cable channels: **Changeling**'s Dreaming is MTV, and the Dreamtime is more like the Discovery Channel.

HOW TO FIND THE DREAMTIME

It isn't as if you can ride through downtown Sydney in a taxi, get out, and step into the Dreamtime. The noise of the city, the pervading paradigm of the Technocratic Union, and the lack of connection with ancestral Dreamborn spirits makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to enter the Dreamtime there. However, the Dreamtime still thrives in the vast tracts of land in the Outback where very few people permanently dwell, and where only Aboriginal people can safely travel, moving slowly enough to step through the veil and into the spirit realm. The slow, measured stride of the Aboriginal shaman on foot, the humming of the vast drone of a Songline

THE SLEEPING LANDS

The Dreamtime is but one of many possible Shallow Realms. A Shallow Realm is merely a spiritual construct that is lodged somewhere between the reality of our world and the symbolism of the spirit world. Somewhere between the Gauntlet and the Umbra, these spiritual constructs bloom and float, bubble-like, on the Velvet Shadow itself: a boil on the face of the Umbrascape. Creating them in modern times is *extremely* difficult. Maintaining them against the weight of the masses' disbelief in such things is well-nigh impossible without channelling Quintessence directly from several Node sources. But some Sleeping Lands, as they are called, are "grandfathered" into the reality of the world because they existed prior to the end of the Mythic Age and because the Sleeping Lands themselves had attained a kind of spiritual sentience and were able to draw upon Nodes within their boundaries to stay "alive" against the crushing weight of Reason.

The method of creating a new Sleeping Land has become lost to all but a few, but there are more of the People in Australia who know the ancient way than there are in any other world population.

SING THE DREAMING EARTH

[••••• OR ••••• MIND, ••••• PRIME,
••••• SPIRIT]

This rite allows a mage to create an area of Shallowing called a Sleeping Land. The area of the Shallowing is directly related to the successes on the roll. When performed in ceremony, this rite is not considered vulgar.

System: In order to properly Sing the Dreaming Earth, the mage must have a group of ceremonial assistants willing to help the mage with this rite. Non-mages are considered properly trained if they have Occult 4 or Enigmas 4, or Dreamtime Lore of 2 or better. Note that the mage receives one extra die for every five of these non-mage helpers participating. The non-mages actually form living anchors for the initial points of construction for the Sleeping Land. The rite uses the Mind sphere to connect the assistants with the principle ritualist, so that they all work together simultaneously.

Each extended dice roll represents one hour of ceremonial dancing and chanting. The magic flows from mind to mind in the pattern, which is essentially a twisting, curling, snake-like hoop. Each participant in the ritual must be within sight of the other: close enough to see the pupils of each other's eyes. The number of successes required is determined by the number of people involved, and thus the number of points on the looping curve.

Assistants	Area Inscribed	Successes
5	A bedroom	10
15	A suburban house	15

25	A football field or similar large area	20
50	A small town	30
200	A city	40
10,000	A continent the size of Australia	50

The mage must also have at least one Node available to him to supply the necessary Quintessence to maintain the Sleeping Land against the crushing weight of Reason. Think of the Sleeping Land as a giant hot air balloon of Spirit: the raw, free Quintessence from the Node, channeled by Prime, will be the warm air that causes the envelope to rise and attain shape. Finally, using Mind 5 in the rite aids the initial casting and makes the envelope semi-aware and able to discern who should and who should not have access within.

Casting: Either a single mage or a small core group of mages will begin the rite, which will introduce them and then call the People to respond. One by one, the other participants filter through the group or past the initiator. They touch hands with this mage, and then begin to walk. When they have gone far enough, they will turn and wait for the rite to continue. Each person participates by walking along the boundaries of the future Sleeping Land with their apprentices.

RULES FOR SLEEPING LANDS

Sleeping Lands are constructions of Mind, Prime and Spirit magic. When created, they are rated according to the number of successes used to generate them. This rating is known as their Duration trait. If everything were peaceful and harmonious, the Sleeping Land would exist indefinitely. But the filthy fingernails of reality pick at this nodule of Quintessence like a man picks at a scab. In addition, something the mage brings to the Land itself may cause it to become threatened. Sleeping Lands thus lose Duration successes at the following rate:

- 1 per month of existence (12 per year)
- 1 for every 50 crossings of its boundary (either in or out)
- 1 for each point of Paradox Backlash that occurs inside or near it

In addition, a Spirit ••• and Prime ••• effect could conceivably deal direct damage to a Sleeping Land's Duration. Luckily, because the Spirit Effect is sustained by the ritual magic, a Sleeping Land only requires Prime ••• to fund a repair Effect, restoring a number of Duration successes equal to the Effect roll.

If a Duration is ever allowed to reach zero or less successes, the Sleeping Land is no more.

Please note that this system applies only to a newly created Sleeping Land. Sleeping Lands that pre-date the end of the Mythic Age would be difficult, if not impossible, to destroy.

SHALLOW REALMS

The Dreamtime is a massive Shallow Realm. Sleeping Lands, as defined above, are also Shallow Realms. These minor, crafted, close-in Spirit Realms are never accidental and they must be maintained to remain in existence.

Shallow Realms have the following characteristics:

- Created by magic; never found naturally. The first Shallow Realms were created by Primal magic before the dawn of history. Unbeknownst to most mages, the static magic ritual secret of crafting a special kind of Shallow Realm called a Den Realm was gifted to the Bastet by their guiding spirit patrons.
- Keyed to a specific individual or a class of individuals: only those individuals may interact with it.
- Tied to a specific territory/boundary on Earth, although larger Shallow Realms tend to ebb and flow in size.
- Limited, if any, influence on Earth and its paradigm.
- Limited, if any, access to the Umbra.

- Either created prior to the Age of Reason, and thus “grandfathered” into the Consensus of Earth, or crafted by static magic using jealously guarded and difficult-to-obtain static rituals. Any other method usually results in an unstable Shallow.

- Detectable by Prime or Spirit magic for only a few minutes after it is directly interacted with (i.e. someone enters or leaves, or calls upon a power or spirit within the Realm). Otherwise, it lies quiescent and hidden within the warp and weave of the Tapestry.

- Requires connections either to Nodes or static magic to remain in existence.

- Guarded by its native entities, sometimes ferociously so.

Any of the Dreamtime rotes described herein would feasibly be useful in any other Shallow Realm with minor adjustments and modifications unique to the Shallow Realm in question.

CROSSING OVER

Crossing from Australia into the Dreamtime is a simple matter for those who are initiated, where the Dreamtime is strong. Consult the chart below for the Gauntlet level that must be used with a **Step Sideways** Effect where it is not as strong. Note that Gauntlet difficulty is not the same as the presence or absence of Dreamtime: that is a more esoteric concept covered in *A Fleeting, Ephemeral but Infinite Song*, below.

Gauntlet Difficulty Conditions

0*	Walking the Songlines in the Outback
1*	Aboriginal-tended wilderness territory
2*	Abandoned wilderness territory or any billabong
3	Outskirts of an Aboriginal settlement
4	Well-traveled “tourist” territory (like Uluru)
5	Outskirts of a European settlement in the Outback
6	Anywhere near a railroad or a highway in the Outback
7	Desert Town (Coober Pedy)
8	Suburb
9	Outskirts of a city
10	Downtown Sydney

* Any difficulty lower than 3 constitutes a Shallowing and does not require a **Step Sideways** Effect for the initiated to enter the Dreamtime. When the Dreamtime reaches this level, an initiated person may cross over with a Wits + Dreamtime Lore roll, difficulty 7. The following modifiers would apply:

- 3 during a ceremony performed by Initiates
- 2 during a Songline droned by a single Initiate
- 1 while carrying a properly prepared Message Stick
- 1 wherever there are more than 100 of the People in one place
- 1 when intoxicated (without the aid of the rote **Liquor’s Calling**)
- 3 when intoxicated (with the aid of the rote **Liquor’s Calling**)
- 1 if properly “painted up”
- +3 if in earshot of the song “Waltzing Matilda”
- +3 if in the presence of any non-initiated European mage
- +2 if in the presence of any non-initiated European
- +2 for five minutes when anyone mentions *Crocodile Dundee*
- +1 for five minutes if anyone says “G’day, mate”
- +1 if dressed in typical modern-day street clothes
- +1 if in the presence of European technology (not including Land Rovers, which are somehow accepted)

guiding her steps — these are the keys that are used to unlock the path into the Dreamtime.

A LINE IN THE SAND: SONGLINES

Think of the Dreamtime as a massive quilt, stitched by Songlines criss-crossing each other. The Songlines are both a body of knowledge (tribal law, oral tradition, lore and folk wisdom) in the form of songs and stories played and told to the People from the moment they are old enough to understand, and they are actually invisible lines in the sand, hidden roads of spirit crisscrossing the Outback. These lines define the spiritual territory of a specific Aboriginal family group. Each territory is specific to that family group and each member of that family group takes an oath to protect the Dreamborn Ancestors who sleep in or around that area.

A FLEETING, EPHEMERAL BUT INFINITE SONG

The Dreamtime is, however, liquid and flexible. Like the swells and strains of the Songlines, or the endless tides of the world's oceans, it can well up in a place and then suddenly vanish like water poured onto desert sands.

As a result, a wise shaman will keep his inner senses tuned to that particular rhythm that tells him if the Dreamtime has flowed, like a sudden invisible monsoon flood, into his area. What would cause this? Any number of things.

The spirit moves in non-rational ways:

- A sufficiently powerful, awakened Dreamborn spirit could be invisibly dragging the Dreamtime along with it in its long, slow circuitous wanderings.
- The yearnings of a young Aboriginal male for his homeland territory may have called out, silently and irresistibly, to the Dreamtime. And the Songlines answered.
- The performance of a particularly sincere and beautifully done ceremony could bring the Dreamtime in like the ocean at high tide.
- Some work of Correspondence, Time or Spirit magic could have called the Dreamtime as a side-effect of the originally intended Effect (although, curiously enough, nobody has been able to do this on purpose).
- The passing of an Elder of the People tends to draw the Dreamtime near.
- The presence of a particularly sacred substance or mineral, such as red ochre or opals or some other item considered holy might draw the Dreamtime closer.

SONGLINE SINGING: USING THE DREAMTIME

The Dreamtime is less like a force to be manipulated or tool to be used and more like a companion to be understood, a dance partner in your mutual magic. In fact, it resists outright commands and responds better to cajoling, coaxing and diplomacy. Rotes created for use with the Dreamtime take this tendency into account and will go to great lengths to get and keep the Dreamtime's attention.

Like any ancient power, it will go its own way and it keeps its own counsel. This can make for some severe contrariness sometimes: even in downtown Sydney, a group of the People, performing ceremony and using their traditional instruments, could conceivably call the Dreamtime forth without realizing it or even trying hard.

INITIATION RITE

In order for a mage to work with the Dreamtime in any way at all, they must be first introduced to it. This introduction takes place within the context of an Initiation Rite. Only those

DREAMTIME LORE

This is a special Knowledge Ability that covers the collected wisdom of the Lawmen and Law-women of the People. Dreamtime Lore is used to handle activities involving rituals, knowledge of the presence or absence of taboos, knowledge of the location of spiritual billabongs, the presence or absence of Dreamtime Ancestors in an area, and whether or not someone is initiated or is an Elder.

The minimum Dreamtime Lore rating needed to be able to Initiate anyone else is 3 dots, which is also the minimum needed to create Passage Sticks, to sanctify *yidakis*, and to otherwise create ritual items of the People.

- Novice: You are either a newly initiated European or an Aboriginal child. Still, you know enough to know when you should hold your tongue.
- Practiced: You have participated in dancing several ceremonies and you have started to wonder if you're ready to lead your own. You are starting to become familiar with the characters painted on the walls of sacred caves.
- Competent: They call you "Papa" or "Mama" and you know much of the ways of the People. Still, with all you know, you also realize that there is so much more to learn.
- Expert: You have led ceremonies for years and have even invented a few steps of your own. Your Songlines are added to the great Song that sweeps across the Dreamtime. You have been quietly restoring the sacred lines on the ancient cave paintings to preserve them.
- Master: You are a great Elder of the People, with the secrets of the Dreamtime locked in your soul. You have crafted your own cave paintings to mark the events of today and the flow of the future.

Possessed by: The People, academics, anthropologists, linguists, tour guides

Specialties: Crossing Over, Law Giving, Truth-saying (prediction), Cave Drawing, Women's Business, Men's Business, Storytelling, Skin Naming, Land Recognition, Dreamborn Ancestor recognition

who have been initiated may initiate others, and the Dreamtime has been known to withdraw initiation from some and refuse to initiate others. Whether this is a conscious act on the part of some guiding spirit intelligence, or a "karmic" result of the actions of the person in question is irrelevant.

The fact remains that some do not receive their initiation no matter how sincerely the ceremony is performed. Furthermore, if an initiated person no longer participates in ceremonies, or has dishonored any spiritual pacts they may have made, or has actively harmed any of the People, their initiation may be suddenly and forcibly withdrawn. All the Elders have a phrase to explain this: "The Dreamtime knows its own way."

When a mage is initiated by certain Aboriginal family groups, he receives a special kind of surname called a "Skin Name." This name identifies his traditional lineage to other Aboriginal Lawgivers, and allows him access to some family groups' alliances.

Note that non-mages can be initiated — indeed, perhaps the majority of those initiated by the Dreamtime are non-Awakened, traditional Aborigines. However, they cannot enter the Dreaming except at Shallowings, where the Gauntlet is below 3. (See the *Crossing Over* sidebar.)

System: Only those with Dreamtime Lore ••• can attempt the ritual of initiation. The ritualist will roll Charisma + Dreamtime Lore. Difficulty is as follows, according to the nature of the person being initiated:

Difficulty Initiate

9	Technomage
8	Awakened European mage (not a Dreamspeaker or Verbena)
7	Non-Awakened European
6	Non-European, Dreamspeaker or Verbena mage
5	Lost Aborigine (one of the People who was raised outside of her tribe)
4	Traditional Aborigine

Only one success is required for non-magical people. Mages require a number of successes equal to their Arete. The following modifiers to the difficulty are used (these are cumulative, but the difficulty can only be modified by a maximum of +/- 3):

-1 Initiate has been without the use of modern-day technology for over a week

-1 Initiate has not used magic within a week

-1 Initiate is exhausted, extremely thirsty, and/or ravenously hungry

-1 Initiate is intoxicated

-1 Initiate is sincerely wishing connection with the Dreaming

+3 Initiate is doubtful or not accepting of the Dreamtime

+1 Initiate has visited the non-Dreamtime Umbra of Australia

BLIND MAN'S BLUFF

Without the Initiation Rite, the Dreamtime (and all that inhabits it) may as well not exist for that particular person or willworker. After the Shattering, the Shaman Fire-tender convinced the Dreamtime to go unseen, like the Goanna in the desert. Ever since then, it has been extremely difficult for non-initiated mages to see, let alone understand.

Still, the Dreamtime's stealthy ways aren't perfect. It should be noted that, prior to the Reckoning, the Void Engineers were on the verge of discovering the Dreamtime using a system that combined sophisticated dimensional space filtering algorithms with an orbital, dimensional-energy sensing platform, and have resumed the project after the disarray caused by their tremendous losses.

The Dreamtime is exclusively for those who are initiated in its ways. It is impossible for the uninitiated to interact magically with the Dreamtime. For uninitiated willworkers using the Spirit sphere, magic will only reach the Penumbra with its attendant Avatar Storm, while their initiated peers will easily pierce the veil into the Dreamtime. While an initiated mage can lead several others into the Dreamtime, they may not find their way alone.

Uninitiated willworkers calling upon Australia's spirit world will receive the attention of all manner of "imported" Eurocentric spirit-forms and a few primal animal spirits that have wandered into or become trapped within the Penumbra, but no spirits of the Dreamtime. This is what has led many mages to believe that Australia is a barren spiritual wasteland, and one of the many reasons it has been left alone by much of Eurocentric mage-kind since its discovery.

As well, those who are without initiation will not be able to sense the ebb and flow of the Dreamtime, nor pick up on those who are specially attuned to it. For the most hubris-wrecked of mages, the Dreamtime is a massive joke, a desert mirage conjured by primitive natives who obviously don't know what they are talking about.

System: Any non-initiated mage attempting to work Effects to locate and/or interact with the Dreamtime must pierce a 50-success Ward, erected before the dawn of history.

AWAKENED EYES OPENED

For a mage, the effect of becoming initiated is that he is suddenly able to perceive the vast spiritual energy field that is the Dreamtime, and interact with it. This is an all-or-nothing state: there is nothing gradual or experiential about it.

Initiation Benefits

• Perception + Awareness (or Perception + Dreamtime Lore, whichever is desired) may sense the presence or absence and relative strength of the Dreamtime in any area, on any one person or object. This is not the case with the uninitiated.

• A mage receives special consideration from the spiritual properties of the Dreamtime when she does her magic in the Dreamtime. Thus, the difficulties for certain forms of magic

worked within the Dreamtime are easier and generate less Paradox, if any. See the *Magic in the Dreamtime* sidebar for more information.

- A mage may learn and utilize rotes specially crafted by shamans for the Dreamtime.

- The mage receives an attunement with a specific Dreamborn Ancestor spirit, which may serve to assist him in everyday ways. See *Dreamborn Ancestors*, below.

Initiation Responsibilities

- The initiated mage is connected with a Dreamborn Ancestor the way some Dreamspeakers are connected to other Totems. The initiated mage gains a Dreamborn Ancestor taboo, a ban that he must never break. This usually involves refusing to eat or kill a certain animal, which is considered to be the ancient Dreamborn Ancestor of that mage. See the individual Dreamborn listings for details.

- The initiated mage must honor the spiritual pacts he has made and must not break his word of honor to a Dreamtime spirit.

- The initiated mage must not directly work to bring lasting harm the People in any way.

- The initiated mage must occasionally attend ceremonies of the People.

THE REWARD OF POWER: CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of not maintaining these responsibilities will be a temporary break in connection with the

Dreamtime. During these “disconnected” times, the mage’s ability to work Dreamtime magic is spotty at best: all difficulties are three higher than normal. Only through the intervention of a fully trained shaman of the People may a mage who has gone astray be brought back into right relationship with the Dreamtime. Usually this is done after a period of consultation and privation, after which the shaman in question performs a purification and rededication ritual.

The Dreamtime does not accept hypocrisy and will not renew a mage’s connection if it senses the mage does not have a true commitment to it.

Sometimes a mage will be required to conduct the ritual of Walkabout, to wander the Outback for days seeking to discover herself and hopefully survive the experience. These Walkabouts are life- and paradigm-changing events, and occasionally result in death. The mage is given a Message Stick explaining who she is and sent to wander the Outback until she meets herself or dies — whichever comes first.

WHO MAY INITIATE?

Only those who have themselves been initiated may initiate others. In addition, they must possess at least three dots in Dreamtime Lore to perform the rite successfully. See *Initiation Rite* for more information.

SPIRITS



The People express the Songlines of the Dreaming in many different ways. All of them reflect that these Songlines are sacred and powerful. They are the subtle laws, myths, and potent beliefs that bind the People together throughout Australia. Each Songline reaches back through time to the First Time. In the Dreamtime, these songs are still being sung for the first time by the Dreamborn.

Each Dreamborn spirit represents a power in and of itself, a Sacred Ancestor. Humans, especially the native people of Australia, were created by the Rainbow Serpent out of the most successful, cleverest Dreamborn back in the PanGaea days. Thus, by tracing your human ancestry, you may be able to one day discover which of the Dreamborn you once were, which creates a spiritual and familial bond that reaches deep into the soul’s bedrock.

Although the word “totem” comes from a Native American Ojibwa term that was translated into English as “guardian spirit,” and conceptually the word does not capture the depth of the bonds between such a spirit and the People, many European people use the word “totem” to describe one’s guiding spirit. As a result, the People are sometimes said to have chosen this or that totem. This is not authentic. They are not totems.

It is, however, advantageous to use the Totem Background, as written and outlined in **Tradition Book: Dreamspeakers**, to represent the People’s relationship with their Dreamborn Ancestor. Aboriginal mages will purchase the Totem Background as part of their character generation. Non-Aboriginal mages, having already Awakened, are not privy to the same rush of connection with their Dreamborn Ancestor as the People’s mages are. Instead, they must spend experience to purchase levels of the Background. Slowly but surely, the bond increases, but in the beginning, it is but a whisper (unless, of course, the initiation rite ends a particularly glorious chapter in the non-Aboriginal mage’s life, and the Storyteller awards her with experience points she can immediately spend to buy the Background).

All Dreamborn Ancestors purchased through this background start with five points to allocate between three traits: Rage, Willpower, and Gnosis, and they have five points of Power. The Ancestor begins with the charms Airt Sense and Re—form. For more information on Dreamborn Ancestors, consult **Tradition Book: Dreamspeakers**.

DREAMBORN ANCESTORS

Here are a few Dreamborn Ancestors and what Innate Abilities, if any, they impart to a willworker who is tied to them.

MAGIC IN THE DREAMTIME

Because the Dreamtime is its own Shallow Realm, magical Effects in keeping with the teachings of the Dreamborn Ancestors and the Early Ones' wisdom are easier to use and generate little to no Paradox, even on a botch.

Lore-gathering effects (especially use of the Time sphere for foreknowledge or glimpses of the past), communication, healing, restoration, and personal transformation effects, and any effects of the Mind sphere (except astral travel, which is not possible within the Dreamtime) are considered sanctioned by the Dreamtime.

There is, however, a catch. Magical Effects begun in the Dreamtime remain in the Dreamtime, and may not reach where the Dreamtime's aura does not touch. Think of it this way: the Tapestry of the Dreamtime is more fluid, more open to manipulation by those who are initiated. But the willworkings sung up in the Dreamtime are too fragile to stand against the harsh reality of Earth.

If a shaman went into the Dreamtime to heal the broken limb of her camel by wrapping it in Aboriginal

dressings and performing a dance ceremony, and then did a Life Effect to heal it, the camel would emerge from the Dreamtime healed. The Dreamtime supports healing. A shaman who stepped into the Dreamtime and pulls an immense opal from the ground using a Correspondence and Matter Effect would find when he emerged that his hands held nothing but quickly vanishing, glittery dust. The Dreamtime does not support the plundering of natural resources. If the same shaman took an actual opal into the Dreamtime with him and asked a spirit of the Rainbow Serpent to bless the opal, the transformation that would then take place on the opal would be permanent: the Dreamtime supports transformation.

Ultimately, it is up to the Storyteller to determine which effects remain and which ones do not when the mage crosses out of the Dreamtime.

Mages who spend a lot of time in the Dreamtime must worry about Dreamsickness upon their return.

DREAMSICKNESS

Although the Dreamtime is closer to material reality than even the Penumbra, mages who spend too much time in the Dreamtime become somewhat disconnected from reality. For every 24 hours of time a mage stays in the Dreamtime, he experiences an equal number of days once he returns to the material world in a kind of magical delirium called "dreamsickness." Dreamsick mages work all magical Effects with a +3 difficulty modifier during their dreamsickness, accompanied by a

+1 difficulty modifier to all Physical trait rolls, due to disorientation and vertigo. Usually, eight hours of restful sleep will cure the vertigo, but not the effects on magic. Dreamsickness can sometimes be ameliorated by an herbal preparation, a poultice known only to certain Aboriginal herbalists, but the poultice rarely works for longer than three hours. Usually, shamans who must take extended trips into the Dreamtime will spend their dreamsick time meditating and recovering.

COCKATIEL (1 INNATE ABILITY)

Cockatiel was once the largest bird in the Dreamtime. His vanity, however, cost him his size. He boasted that he was more beautiful than Lightning Man's wife. Lightning Man used his power and reduced Cockatiel to the small, vain, angry bird that we know today. Cockatiel-kin tend to be attractive, artistic, shallow, and mean.

Ban: You must never turn down the opportunity to be admired and must always accept any compliments given to you.

Innate Ability: Following a Dreamborn of great vanity, seeking pleasure always, those adopted by Cockatiel receive a +1 bonus to all Appearance rolls.

DINGO (3 INNATE ABILITIES)

Crafty, intelligent, stealthy, and quick, the Dingo is an ubiquitous trickster. Able to cross easily between the lands of the Outback and the streets of civilization, Dingo fights for its survival on a daily basis. With an extremely cunning mind, Dingo guides those he claims to break the boundaries and go where no one should be. Dingo decided to be the helper and watcher of the First Shaman. He stole fire and gave it to the

People when the Shaman refused to give up his treasure. Flexible and accepting of new ways, Dingo is able to thrive in environments others cannot. As a result, those he adopts are more likely to find Dingo kin in cities than any other place in Australia.

Dingo Kin tend to be hyperactive, constantly watching the exits, prone to stalking back and forth if forced to wait for very long. They are frequently fond of outlandish styles and fashions, particularly wide-brimmed fancy hats. They like to wear dingo claws on necklaces and other pieces of jewelry. They are frequently on the wrong side of the law. They are not to be trusted.

Ban: You must never let sleeping dogs lie. That is to say, any time you can curiously poke around some locked door, some well-guarded vault, you will. You are drawn to the boundaries anywhere you go, and always seek to break them in ways that will allow you to not get caught.

Innate Abilities: +2 Stealth, +1 Alertness.

EAGLEHAWK (3 INNATE ABILITIES)

Fiercely protective, Eaglehawk claims those who watch over others as his rightful kin. Eaglehawk's ability to see far and to remain ever-vigilant has been helpful over the years to warn

of approaching intruders. Always watchful and extremely paternal, Eaglehawk will assiduously protect the weak, the innocent, and the young. The legend of Eaglehawk is that he once trusted another Dreamborn (Crow) to take care of his young and Crow, in a fit of rage, killed them and then tried to cover it up.

Eaglehawk kin sometimes seem to be somewhat paranoid, always watching out for those they must protect. They have been known to go to great extremes to avoid anyone harming those they have charge over. The cost of this vigilance is usually any close, personal relationships at all.

Ban: You must never refuse a request for help from the weak, the innocent, or the young.

Innate Abilities: +2 Alertness, +1 Investigation

GOANNA (2 INNATE ABILITIES)

Hidden and quiet, but good to eat, Goanna is a small, chameleon-like lizard who is constantly on the run from predators. Goanna teaches the values of cunning and being still, in addition to prosperity. In the stories of the People, Goanna was famous for faking his own death so that he could rise again with the morning sun. Goanna kin tend to be curious mystics, full with mysteries and questions. But they keep their own counsel. They pay attention to their own

enigmatic agendas and rarely tell the whole truth about anything. They can move very fast if frightened.

Ban: You must always avoid the spotlight. Your shyness means that you must not trust others with your secrets unless absolutely necessary.

Innate Abilities: +1 Enigmas, +1 Athletics.

HONEY ANT (2 INNATE ABILITIES)

The honey ant teaches that striving for something and achieving it is important. Questing for honey ants to pop in your mouth is a favorite pastime among some family groups. There is a certain mythic resonance in the fact that they are both sweet and hard to get. The more difficult to get them, the sweeter they become.

Honey ants are formed, it is said in the Dreamtime stories, of the eyelashes of the Sun Woman. When she blinked her eyes, they fell to earth and multiplied. Honey ants are ubiquitous throughout the desert regions that Aboriginal people roam. They are important to the survival of the Aboriginal people.

Ban: You must always strive for that which is just out of your reach, even if you can't quite make it.

Innate Abilities: +1 to all Manipulation rolls, and +1 to an Ability of the Honey Ant kin's choice—something he strives for.



KANGAROO (2 INNATE ABILITIES)

These mammals are loyal parents and share parenting duties between the adult genders. Kangaroos are considered sacred animals because their pouches produce life and protect their young for survival. Kangaroo wears his pouch because he must guard and defend the next generation of kangaroo and ensure their survival. Speed, big feet, and uncanny senses mean that the Kangaroo is no easy prey. It was Sister Kangaroo who taught the Law Women how to care for the smallest babies and how to help a woman give birth.

Ban: You must always nurture and protect the young. Have something on hand for them: give them candy, a story, a dream. They are the future.

Innate Abilities: +2 Charisma on all rolls to influence or protect children and teens.

KOALA (3 INNATE ABILITIES)

Koala represents simple, single-minded purpose. There is no questioning Koala's path once he sets it. You will be hard pressed to change one iota of his mind. When the Rainbow Serpent was asking what food was needed in the world, Koala said that he would like to eat of a specific tree that he had found. "Surely, Koala, you want more food than that!" Serpent said. But, no, Koala didn't. To this day, Koala only feeds on eucalyptus, gradually becoming serene and content with this pungent meal every day. Koala's claws are sharp, but he is usually too serene from his eucalyptus meal to ever use them against anyone. Still, Koala's survival is greatly linked to his tenacity and strength of will.

Ban: You must choose one food you must eat and one activity that you must do at all costs, every day. If you fail to either perform this activity or eat this food, you will lose Koala's Willpower bonus, in addition to losing a temporary point of Willpower, which cannot be regained until your activity/eating regimen is resumed.

Innate Ability: +3 bonus on Willpower rolls.

KOOKABURRA (4 INNATE ABILITIES)

A trickster to rival Dingo, Kookaburro is the wild bird of the Outback. You might think he is footloose and fancy-free because of his laugh. But ultimately, he laughs only in a cynical fashion. He laughs when he sees a predator about to choose a meal. Kookaburro represents the intuitive knowledge of danger that everyone has but sometimes chooses not to act upon. It is said that Kookaburro once warned Goanna about an attack from Eaglehawk. Because Goanna got away and Kookaburro laughed at Eaglehawk's missed swoop, Eaglehawk asked Rainbow Serpent to give Kookaburro something to really laugh about. Serpent declined, but the fact that great Eaglehawk felt it necessary to seek revenge against poor little Kookaburro was hilarious enough to the bird that Eaglehawk's curse became fact. Now Kookaburro can't resist laughing when faced with certain doom.

Ban: You are unable to keep yourself from laughing whenever you're in serious danger.

Innate Ability: +2 Alertness, +2 Streetwise or Survival (choose one).

KUTJI SPIRITS (4 INNATE ABILITIES)

These are spirits that cause illness, distress and death, but they can be mastered by those with spirit knowledge and who are initiated shamans. If they are mastered, they can be used in healing or other kinds of magic. They tend to possess animals like black crows, eagles, owls, kangaroos, or emus, but they've also been seen in black rain clouds or dust storms, or even mirages. The Dreamtime stories name them as the Ancestors of Magical Power and they have always been considered subtle, powerful, and vindictive. They have been consulted in feuds and in bringing lovers back from the brink of death. They appear without warning from sandstorms and disappear the same day, leaving behind bitter truths and reasons to hate.

Kin to the Kutji are known for their odd quirks, their minor rituals for everything, their fastidious ways, and their fondness for bones.

Ban: You may not help anyone who does not properly pay you first.

Innate Abilities: +2 Awareness, +2 Dreamtime Lore.

GAROU

The Bunyip, a tribe of werewolves from Australia, have all vanished. But there are still Garou in the Outback. These Garou represent all the world's cultures that have settled in Australia: there are Celtic Fianna, German Get of Fenris, and even elite Silver Fangs. But the only Garou who know the secret of the Dreamtime and its Songlines are the Uktenea Garou who are of the People (they call themselves the Wolf Koori).

The Wolf Koori have shared their knowledge with a bare few of the European Garou, but one must be initiated in a full ceremony before one can Step Sideways into the Dreamtime. The Rainbow Serpent Pack called "Dreamtime Running" is the most well-known Wolf Koori pack. They are known for their cunningly planned attacks on Technocracy outposts that try to pick up on the Dreamtime. They have also been known to work with the Dingo Dogs, a pack of Bone Gnawers, to steal from road trains and provide free food and goods to the People.

Remember that magic performed in the Dreamtime stays in the Dreamtime. So Gifts and Rituals used there will tend to stay there. When Garou who are initiated Step Sideways, they may choose which Gauntlet they are attempting to pierce: the Dreamtime shell or the shell of the Near Umbra.

The mystery of the Bunyip remains unsolved, though you can still hear the cry of the Bunyip across the bush if you listen just right and the moon is high in the sky.



LIGHTNING MEN (4 INNATE ABILITIES)

The Lightning Men are inscrutable spirits from behind the sky. They dance beautiful dances among the clouds, but when they dance close, they bring death and leave behind fire and suffering. The Lightning Men have the Sky as their territories and they dance their own Lightning Ceremonies to preserve the *wungud* of the Sky Dream. To travel among them is to walk a world of intense, passionate warriors who will kill without a moment's consideration but who respect the People. They can occasionally be persuaded to assist the People in various undertakings, especially the younger ones who enjoy striking the Earth. Lightning Men recognize speed as the most important of all things. Their ceremonies take place in the blinking of an eyelash.

Those who are Kin to Lightning Men might have unusual coloration (pale white hair, for example, or pink eyes) and tend to talk to fast. They live fast and well, struggling through everyday life to try and piece together puzzles to find meaning.

Ban: You are unable to resist the opportunity to move faster: you will always run rather than walk, break the speed limit rather than go slowly, or fly instead of drive. Faster, better, more. That's your requirement.

Innate Ability: +2 Athletics, +2 Dodge.

OWL (3 INNATE ABILITIES)

Believed to be capable of smelling death, the Owl is a watcher for evil spirits and all that goes by night. As a result he is greatly honored, but also feared, for he may bring death to camp. Though Owl is a Dreamborn Ancestor, he is also connected to the Owl totem of **Werewolf**, and through that Owl, to other Owls. It is said that Owl's feathers are given to those who will one day become Lawgivers, because of a Dreamtime story where Owl was requested to judge a conflict between two hunters. Owl took for his fee the slain carcass of the animal the hunters had fought over.

Owlkin tend to be known by their aloof and laconic nature. They are capable of fixing others in a stare for hours. They tend toward understatement, both in dress and in communication.

Ban: You may never turn down someone who legitimately needs you to make a judgment between two conflicting parties.

Innate Abilities: +1 Wits, +2 Occult.

QUINKIN SPIRITS (2 INNATE ABILITIES)

These lusty spirits are the true embodiments of sex and lusty urges. They appear as long, skinny stick people with wide eyes and over-exaggerated genitalia. They will attempt to have sex with literally anything. Whenever they materialize, they

feel the need to immediately have sex and will attack anything, including humans, and force sex with them if they cannot convince them to have sex. Some UFO abductions reported in the Outback are actually Quinkin Spirits out for a lark late at night. A story tells of the rape of woman who died after being impaled on a Quinkin's penis. The woman's husband brought her back to life and swore revenge. He trapped the Quinkin in a tree and burnt it down. The Quinkin was burned to ashes, except for his penis, because it was so hard. The husband then got the penis, cut it up and threw it all over the country, which is where penises and clitorises came from.

Ban: You can never pass up a chance to have sex with someone whenever it is available.

Innate Abilities: Those who are kin to Quinkin Spirits receive a +2 on any Manipulation roll for the purposes of convincing someone else to have sex with them.



Note: Only those mages initiated into the Dreamtime may learn and use these rotes.

CALL THE DREAMBORN SIBLING [••• SPIRIT]

This summons a spirit of the Dreamtime, usually one affiliated with the surrounding area. Because of the flexibility of time in the Dreamtime, spirits rarely arrive on time. It takes persistence to get one of the Dreamborn to come when you call: the People have learned to simply send the Call and wait patiently for Dreamborn to arrive.

During casting, the People will sit for hours meditating and humming a Dreamtime drone, either standing on one foot in the sand or sitting cross-legged. They will become stone-like, looking unseeing into the middle distance. They will breathe so infrequently that they appear petrified. Finally, after several hours of this, they will clap their hands and welcome the spirit they called. Usually there is no visible sign the spirit is near, but those with the sense to see the Dreamtime can see the spirit easily. The shaman will converse with the spirit as if the spirit were as plain as day, and will complain bitterly to anyone standing nearby if they do not see or do not respect the spirit they've called.

System: The only difference between this rote and the standard **Call Spirit** Effect is that it facilitates speech across the thin veil that is the Dreamtime, whereas **Call Spirit** does not. Also, it taps into the Dreamtime, not the Umbra; thus, there is no reaching across the Gauntlet. Note that mages who are the kin of a specific Dreamborn can call siblings of that Dreamborn at a -2 bonus on the difficulty.

DINGO'S TOUCH [• ENTRPY, •• FORCES]

Dingoes are known for their ability to get into and out of situations they shouldn't be in. This rote is known for its ability

RAINBOW SERPENT (3 INNATE ABILITIES)

Rainbow Serpent is renowned for her creation of the Dreamtime. Some stories say she cracked open one of her million skins and, hissing through it, blew it out to form the spiritual shell that is the Dreamtime. Others say she possessed the body of Firebringer and made him her First Shaman. Thus, nearly every shaman in Australia owes his existence, tangentially, to Rainbow Serpent.

Serpent's kin are typically quiet, reserved types who can occasionally launch into a rant or tirade. Despite their colorful name, they rarely choose anything other than earth-tone clothing. They have a fondness for light and the casting of shadows.

Ban: You must seek always to serve the Dreamtime, initiate those who must be initiated, and to prevent those who must not know from knowing about it.

Innate Ability: +1 Dreamtime Lore, +1 Cosmology, -1 to any difficulty when directly serving the Dreamtime.

ROTES

to find a way. Simple locks spring open. Doors are unlocked. Windows slide open. The Dingo gets by, and so do the People.

When casting, the mage walks circuitously this way and that near the area he wishes to target, keeping an eye on his shadow. When Dingo's shadow emerges from his own shadow, he knows in which direction to look for Dingo's Touch.

System: Entropy helps the mage see the weakness in the system, while Forces releases potential kinetic energy to jostle, rattle, and otherwise jiggle security systems. The obvious nature of the way out or in is more apparent depending on the number of successes rolled. The Storyteller can choose to ask for a Perception + Awareness or Perception + Security roll if the assistance isn't very obvious. In no event is this rote vulgar: every assistance Dingo gives is purely coincidental.

DREAMBORN ROUSING [•••• LIFE, •••• MATTER, ••• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

This forbidden rite is used to rouse a quiescent Dreamborn spirit. Only the most powerful Dreamborn spirits can even potentially be roused: the rest have succumbed to reality long ago. When they awaken, they're ravenous for magical power and life force and they have totally lost all sense of who or what they are.

The beginning of this ceremony looks a lot like the common beginning to all the Endless Sleep rituals, except that the ceremony stops and starts in a seemingly random way and the rite ends with the principle practitioner driving a stone shard through his hand and into the body of the Dreamborn itself.

System: The ritual successes generated by this rote are in direct opposition to the rote called **Ensure the Endless Sleep**. Successes on the roll must go towards first eroding successes generated by that rote, and then are actively opposed by the spirit's Willpower. When the Dreamborn awakens, it will be ravenously hungry for Quintessence. Treat it as a Totem

Avatar spirit. It will drain every source of Quintessence nearby and, if there is none, people will start to look really juicy and interesting to it.

ENSURE THE ENDLESS SLEEP [•• MATTER, •• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

One of the jobs of the People is to ensure that that which sleeps remains so. The People travel from place to place in their territory performing this rote. Anthropologists have done studies of these complex ceremonies and believe them to be merely worship of nature spirits. However, if the People failed to perform their duty, the Dreamborn would slowly begin to rouse and waken. Then, entities that have been slumbering for centuries would rouse, hungry, and begin to take their sustenance any way they could.

Some of the weaker Dreamborn succumb over the course of centuries because the last bit of their spirit essence is leached away by the tides of the Tapestry. The most powerful (and thus, the most hungry) sleeping Dreamborn are rarely destroyed in this manner.

Generations of Aborigines have created specifically tailored ceremonies for each of the People's sleeping Dreamborn.

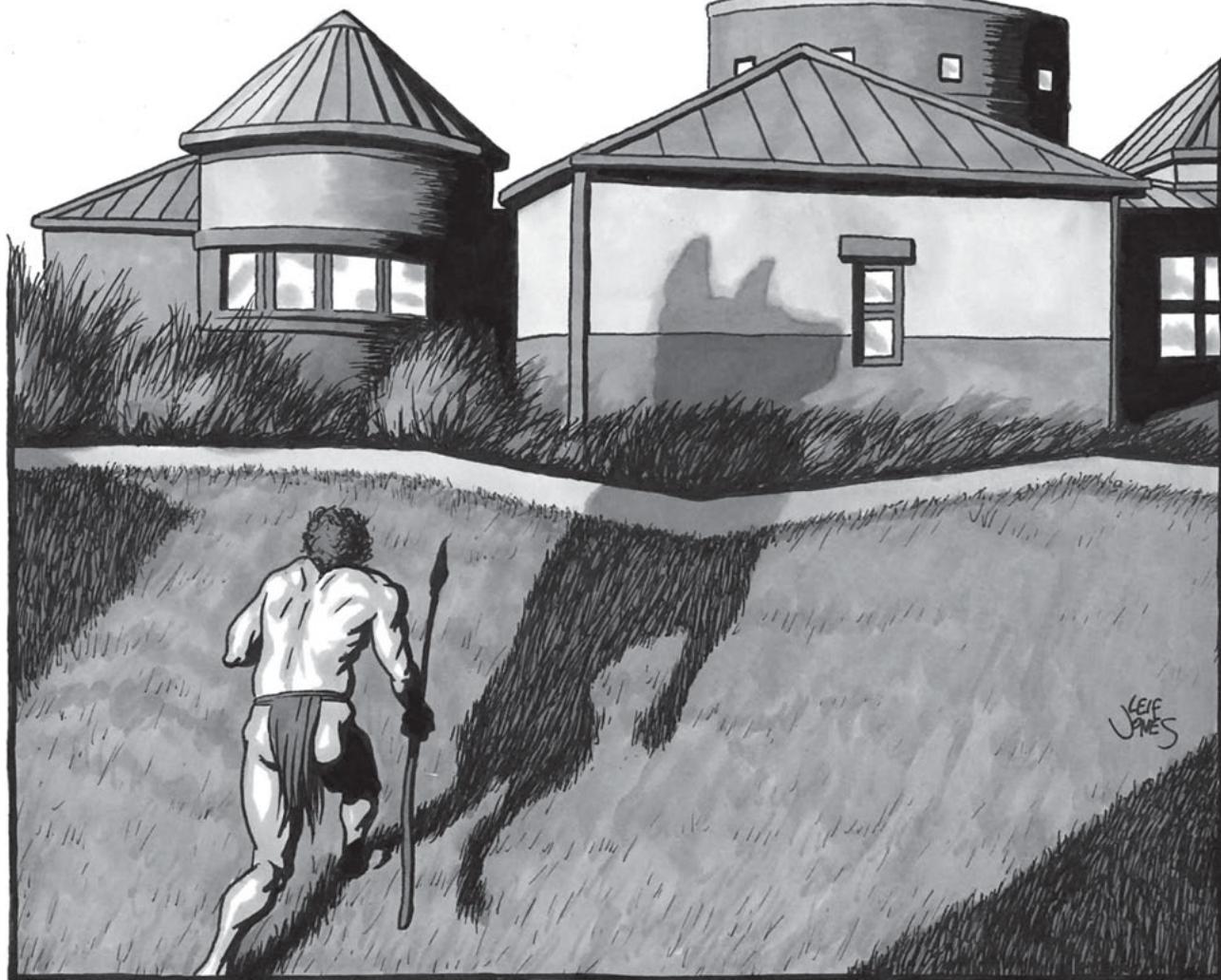
Each one is different, incorporating a story about the Dreamborn, dire warnings if the Dreamborn should awaken, and honoring and revering the Dreamborn as it sleeps. Many times, the People will leave a token to the Dreamborn spirit should their ceremony not be accepted and the Dreamborn awakens later, when they are far away.

System: Ritual successes on this rote ensure that a quiescent Dreamborn remains asleep. Even one success is enough to ensure another moontime of sleep, while many successes ensure the sleep for countless generations to come. This rote opposes the dangerous **Dreamborn Rousing** rote, and has been used in the past to thwart the plans of insane or unwise People who attempt to waken those Dreamborn who are best left asleep.

The Spirit aspect of this ritual opens a portal to the Dreamtime, Mind first confirms the identity of the Dreamborn in question and then begins to lull and soothe the spirit. Finally, Matter is added to strengthen the calcified spirit-body against the ravages of time and erosion.

GOANNA'S HIDING [•• MATTER]

This rotes causes the clothing worn by the mage to take on a color, hue and visual texture close to that of the



surrounding area. It was originally designed to take advantage of the heavy patterns of ochre that the People sometimes wear. This coincidental magic can be explained away by the People's preference for wearing loincloths and such that match their natural surroundings, and for their tendency to wear different colors of ochre paint in ceremonies.

When casting, the mage must stand very still near the texture she wishes to mimic, and then brushes a bit of ochre on her fingers, then on the texture, and then on forehead. As soon as the ochre touches her forehead, that which touches her skin changes color and texture.

System: Successes add dice to any Dexterity + Stealth roll.

GUNCOTTAN'S BLESSING [••• MATTER]

This rote allows an initiated mage to change the nature of any organic substance to cause it to be a fairly potent explosive. Because of the relative availability of explosives in heavy mining areas, this rote is coincidental in those areas.

The mage goes walkabout with the organic matter in his pockets. After several days, when the matter begins to truly stink, it will dry and then — and only then — is it ready to be detonated.

System: The mage needs carbon-rich matter (which can be as base as feces or as complex as fried chips). The successes indicate the lethal damage that the explosive will deliver when detonated. The mage must then roll Wits + Technology to properly set the explosive and detonate it. The substance proves to be a crude explosive if examined scientifically, which has led many authorities to believe there are explosives laboratories hidden somewhere in the Aboriginal slums of the cities.

LIQUOR'S CALLING [• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

There are those who say that alcohol replaces the feeling of the Dreamtime for urban Aborigines who have walked clear of the pathway of their ancestors. This rote causes a remote and distant connection with the Dreamtime that soon fades. It requires enough alcohol to make the caster drunk, preferably with the most revolting liquor that he can find. Then, if he doesn't pass out, he attempts to gather the attention of the Dreamtime either by playing the *yidaki* or rattling the bullroarer while weaving slowly around in a drunken circle. During this trance state, it is as if the user is on tribal land, in tribal ceremony.

System: The Mind sphere helps the mage to focus while intoxicated and the Spirit sphere calls the Dreamtime down to suffuse the mage wherever he is. This rote provides a -3 to all difficulties involving Dreamtime Lore, in addition to a -3 to all difficulties for crossing into the Dreamtime.

The difficulty for this rote increases by two every time it is used in a seven-day period. The numbers of successes determine how long the state remains. The mage must roll Stamina + Survival to avoid throwing up and ruining the preparation of this rote. A botch on this roll means the mage passes out.

LUCK THE WAKING DREAMBORN [••• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

The droning call of the *yidaki*, the singing and chanting of the People, can be turned to many purposes. This rote is most often used to calm a potentially violent or dangerous spirit who has caused damage to the People.

In the early Dreamtime, when there was no membrane separating the reality of the People from the Dreamtime, Dreamborn who were put to sleep this way became part of the natural environment of the world. The end of the Mythic Age caused them to calcify into solid material, creating rock formations of wonderful beauty.

When casting, the People whisper to the wind with verbal caresses akin to calming or quieting a child. Then they play their *yidaki*, sending waves of calming sound all over the area. Some of the People in attendance must pinch their thighs or bite their cheeks to avoid also going to sleep. The shaman must keep his breath clean and even when lulling his Dreamborn brother or sister. There is a saying, "Nothing can be hurried about the Dreamtime." This process takes as long as it takes — which is to say hours, on occasion.

System: The ritual successes generated by this rote are opposed by a spirit's Willpower roll. Mages who are children to a specific Dreamborn receive a bonus of -2 to the roll's difficulty. If the spirit fails, its experiences a wave of sleepiness and spiritual fatigue that results in its calming down, relaxing and slowly falling into Slumber. A botch on the mages' part will enrage the spirit, while a failure may not be noticed if the Dreamborn is not particularly intelligent or perceptive. The spirit being lulled cannot be under attack or in any danger. The Spirit Sphere aspect opens the path to the fractious spirit and begins to appease and slow the spirit while Mind encourages the Slumber.

PRESENTATION OF THE PASSAGE STICK [••• SPIRIT]

This sends a kind of spiritual call out into the Dreamtime of the land around the mage, introducing her to all who are aware of such things. Such a rote requires a Passage Stick Focus to work properly, and there are Passage Stick Wonders which perform this rote automatically upon crossing into a new territory. This rote does not allow two-way communication: the visitor announces himself and then waits to see what response he'll get, if any. Note that it is considered extremely inappropriate to traverse the territory of another family group if you haven't performed this rote.

When casting, the mage whistles into the air while holding the Passage Stick in his hand. On the receiving end, the initiated catches a glimmer of a feeling of an encroaching presence on his territory.

System: All those in the area who are initiated and possess Dreamtime Lore 3 or better can sense the Presentation with a successful Perception + Awareness or Dreamtime Lore roll.

SENSE THE DREAMTIME SONG [• CORRESPONDENCE, • SPIRIT]

This rote allows a mage who is familiar with the Dreamtime Song to listen to it and examine it for special qualities. Essentially, it allows a mage the opportunity to discern the boundaries and strength of the Dreamtime in the area, what Dreamtime spirits may or may not be nearby, and whether the Sleeping Lands are on the wax or the wane.

The willworker enters into a light trance state by either humming, moving silently in special ceremonial patterns, or by painting himself. The lines of his fingers as he dances, or the lines of paint on his face, soon begin to reverberate silently within the music of the Dreamtime. Then, and only then, does the Dreamtime become clear.

System: Simple Perception + Awareness rolls might give the mage a basic idea of the presence of the Dreamtime, but it doesn't give much information. **Sense the Dreamsong** will allow a willworker who knows it to see the flows of the Dreamtime as he makes his way through the world, and catch glimpses of the events occurring within the Dreamtime. With Mind •• added, it could be used as a scan to detect whether someone has ever been affiliated with the Dreamtime. Note: This rote can be used to sense other Shallow Realms outside of Australia.

SONGLINE SOARING [••• SPIRIT]

This enables the mage literally to merge with a Songline and emerge from it at another point along its length. Using this rote, one of the People can cross huge distances across Australia at a fraction of the time it would take anyone else to walk it. This rote utilizes the Dreamtime's spatial distortion to good effect: essentially, the mage does most of his traveling in the Dreamtime.

Humming the Songline to himself, the mage walks into the distance. Thermal haze pelting him, he is soon a vision on the horizon, a dot, and then he's gone. Coming into focus on the other side of his walk, he moves into sight slowly — indistinct, sometimes surrounded in a dust storm. Unless you had timed him, you would never know that he crossed miles and miles of Outback in the same time it took for him to walk a mile.

System: After properly identifying a Songline with the rote **Songline Walking**, the mage can effectively mimic the Correspondence Seven League Stride Effect. The only difference is that the mage must walk for a period of time before and after the transition to properly utilize the Songline's power, and the mage cannot step off the path of the Songline.

SONGLINE WALKING [• SPIRIT]

This enables the mage to follow the path of a Songline, if she has been introduced to it.

When casting, the mage keeps his eyes open and moistened with drops of life-giving natural water as he walks, humming the Songline that is keyed to the path he seeks.

System: Successes add to the Perception + Dreamtime Lore roll to sense the path of a Songline.

WURNAN BLESSING [•• ENTROPY, •• SPIRIT]

The Law Woman of the tribe comes to a new baby and speaks to the other women about the destiny of the child, giving advice to the women of the tribe as to the child's guidance. This briefly connects the child's spirit into the Wurnan Law, the inter-relationship between all members of tribe. The Entropy facet of this rote helps to insure that minor accidents do not befall the baby in its first days.

This rote is of particular use to non-native mages, if they can get a native Law Woman to use it on them, as it will grant them a brief connection to the Dreamtime.

When casting, the Law Woman cradles the infant in her arms and sings a history Songline of her people, explaining to the child his place in the great chain of life. Eventually, she bathes the child's head and then paints his forehead with a dot of white ochre, symbolizing purity.

System: Cast on an Aboriginal infant, this introduces the child's spirit to the Ancestors and to the Dreamtime. Because of the non-traditional education given to all the children of the tribe as they grow, this is just the first step upon the road for the new person. The connection to the Dreamtime is fleeting, but important, an ember that can be fanned for the future. Cast on a non-Aborigine, the successes reduce the difficulty for him to sense the Dreamtime (up to -3).

TREASURES BULLROARER

Level 2 Wonder

This object is used to aid in summoning spirits of all kinds, especially beneficial spirits. The use of a bullroarer in any willworking designed to call Dreamtime spirits lowers the difficulty by 2.

WURNAN STICK (MESSAGE STICK)

Level 1 Wonder

The Wurnan Stick is a receptive object for thoughts to be projected into it. Acting as a conduit of thought, the stick absorbs whatever thoughts, feelings, or wisdom the bearer has for it upon its activation. Thereafter, it attempts to express these thoughts to whoever else touches the stick. The message "writer" rolls Manipulation + Expression, difficulty 7, to "set" the message. The message "reader" rolls Perception + Awareness (or Enigmas) to ascertain the message. The difficulty of this roll is 9 minus the number of successes of the "writing" roll. The Wurnan Stick can only be "written" once, but can be read by whoever picks it up.

YIDAKI (DIDJERIDU)

Level 3 Wonder

A properly crafted *yidaki* (popularly called the *didjeridu*, which has many English spellings) is a powerful tool for connection to the Dreamtime. Because of the nature of its power, it is considered a male-only instrument (one look at its extremely

phallic shape can explain this quite easily). Even a Sleeper who uses a *yidaki* properly can easily connect with the Dreamtime spirit that suffuses the Australian Outback. The instrument is created out of a special kind of eucalyptus tree (and there are over 300 different types of eucalyptus trees in Australia) and it is initially crafted by “white ants,” termites that burrow through the soft inner layers of the tree while leaving the outer layers solid. This is what causes the instrument to have the droning sound: the breath through the pipe of the instrument is channeled through the myriad complex tunnels caused by the termites.

Yidaki come in many different styles. Each individual Songman has his own method of finishing his creation (for it

is truly the termites who start it), and they are frequently painted to the tribal customs of the people to whom the Songman belongs. Different *yidaki* are used for different purposes: some are for lively, upbeat dances and celebratory rituals and others are used for the low, mysterious drone of an initiation or lawgiving rite.

Use of a *yidaki* as a focus for Spirit magic in the Outback by a trained Songman gives a -3 to all Spirit magic difficulties in Effects dealing with the Dreamtime. Non-Awakened practitioners may use the *yidaki* to simulate the **Sense the Dreamtime** rote through a Charisma + Performance roll, difficulty 7.

THE AWAKENED PERSPECTIVE



Many paths have been traveled since the first times. Many steps have been taken. If you would understand, you must first touch the places I touch, see what I see. Only then will you truly know.

—Corben Redhand, Dreamspeaker of the People

Dreamspeakers and those who have learned stories from them tell tales about the First Times. In these tales, they explain that the first mages in Australia were shamans, who came to Australia along with the Aboriginal people, across the land bridge that brought them there. These Early Ones, who were essentially proto-Dreamspeakers before there were such a thing, guided the Aborigines to the safe haven of the land that would become Australia. There is no doubt that the Aborigines would have made it there on their own, but the leadership of the People at the time needed the shamans' advice. Lots were consulted, portents read, the mysteries of the soul were laid bare and the shifting forces deep beneath the young earth were felt and known.

The shamans accurately predicted the cataclysm that would later drown the land bridge and create an island continent, and some noted in their lots that there was a favorable sign for continued survival and prosperity in the future, if they would but follow the Dreamborn to a new land.

The Dreamborn were powerful spirit creatures that had originated in the dawn of human history. Their genesis will always remain a mystery, for the same reasons an infant child cannot consciously remember her first birthday. Dreamspeakers sing stories about how they were born out of the first dreams of the People. The fact that they are usually connected with animal or plant kin leads some Hermetics to theorize that they were spiritual echoes, a kind of Platonic ideal or Jungian archetype of the animal or plant in question. All the existing spirit records of the collective Traditions note that these first Dreamborn would later grow in power to become Incarna.

During these early days, the Dreamborn had natural bodies, a presence in the world. They both ate of the physical

fruit of the land and took suck at the bounteous breasts of Mother Gaia, feeding on Quintessence directly from her teat. They enjoyed both the free flow of the leys from the many Nodes in the land, and, as well, ran and frolicked in the raw Odylic Force generated by many regular Junctures.

One of the Early Ones (whose true name is lost, but is sung as «Fire Child») managed to make contact with a few Dreamborn: Snake, Owl, and Dog (Dingo). They consented to speak to this two-headed monkey-kin when he broke up a three-way conflict, where Snake and Owl had vied for the same prey, and Dog wanted to eat some, too. Using his stone chopper, he separated pieces of the prey, which allowed all three to eat.

After their meal, the powerful Dreamborn, who were grateful for the peaceful resolution of their conflict and who each had enough to eat for their measure, allowed the monkey-kin an audience. Fire Child asked the Dreamborn the question, the answer to which would echo down through the ages, “What would you have of the Early Ones? What would you want of those who see with two pairs of eyes, know with two hearts, and share with two souls?”

Although cloaked in Owl’s riddles, Snake’s secrecy, and Dog’s wiles, over time, through long ceremony with dancing and chanting, the truth came out and was given to Fire Child: the Dreamborn needed the Early Ones to be able to reproduce when they wished.

Like every other creature in the Outback, the Dreamborn only reproduced when they had enough extra sustenance for their children to survive. Although the power flowed freely in those ancient times, the vast amounts of energy needed to sustain a newborn Dreamborn taxed even that source. The only time there was enough was when a Juncture occurred, a sparking of power that usually coruscated down out of the living sky, or out of a wonderful water-hole, or riding a sea-breeze, or following the line of the sun.

The Dreamborn could never accurately predict their arrival, or how powerful they would be when they did arrive. The Early Ones, with their knowledge of flows and their

ability to cast lots to read the patterns of fate, could easily predict a Junctures' arrival and departure.

But what could the Dreamborn offer the Early Ones? Their affinity with the spirit realm enabled them to teach great secrets of magic to these early shamans. In addition, each of the Dreamborn agreed to place their mark on one of the People, to watch over and protect those people and to guide them through the world.

The Early Ones were gathered from throughout the island world, and formed a great fire-circle. Only after all the Early Ones agreed did they decide what they would do. Only one of them would be required to cause the whole to be in disagreement. It took a lot of talk and many suns passed by as they did all speak. But eventually, an agreement was reached: what the Dreamborn offered was too tempting to them to ignore. Thus, as a result of a massive *corroboree*, each Dreamborn found themselves bound to a bloodline of the People, and it remains so until this day.

For a time, the Early Ones went away from the People, and followed the drone of the ley-lines that reverberated through the Dreamtime in this new land. Where they found the possibility that a Juncture would take place, they marked well that place in the song of their heart. It was the job of each Early One to hold their personal song in their heads, and continually repeat it to themselves as they traveled the land. However, the Early Ones feared that their carefully derived songs would be lost. Through the magic of dance, song, and rhythm, the Early Ones were able to create a mnemonic device, called a Songline, which assisted in the memory and teaching of these pieces of sacred lore.

The Early Ones then led the People to sacred places, using the Songlines, and showed them the ceremonies and rites they would have to do to call Dreamborn to the area. They showed them how to properly time a Juncture. Their magic would then open a flow of power into the Dreamborn and an exchange would take place: the energies from the Juncture would rush into the Dreamborn, sometimes resulting in an equal exchange of spirit-knowledge and instant knowing. The newly whelped Dreamborn would then make its acquaintance of the People as well.

For many generations, the Early Ones led the People in these rites, and they learned them. By the time the People began to sing and dance the rites without the Early Ones in attendance, the Aboriginal system of initiation was set in place and has remained relatively unchanged for 70,000 years.

The Songlines themselves soon grew to be potent forces on their own, chains of thought that were self-sustaining. Woven together and connected, they formed the Dreamtime Song, a vast droning connection of Songline to Songline, pulsing with power and spreading from each person to every other person.

The Songlines outlined areas, the boundaries of which were respected by different families of the People as they

roamed throughout the land. Over time, the Dreamborn developed wander-tracks like the animals and the People, and they followed their own Chosen. The Songlines thus marked the ancestral lands of the People. They were described by their power.

Then came a time known as the Desolation. Instead of using the gifts of pure energy that the People were giving them to reproduce, the Dreamborn were instead ingesting the energy and using it to grow greater and greater. They demanded reverence and worship from the People as gods.

The constant consumption of the fruits of Juncture had the effect of lessening the overall flow of energy over time. The Early Ones spent many years trying to track down the causes of this drain on the power of the land, but they did not find out about the Dreamborn's gluttony until too late. Ley-lines began to dry up and water holes were drained of power.

Driven insane by the excess of power coursing through them, the Dreamborn rampaged. There were many deaths of the People as their spirit brethren grew erratic, selfish, and obscene. Several huge, distended Dreamborn, bloated on the stuff of pure energy, could do nothing but slumber. In their slumber they dreamed, and where they dreamed, they crossed the veil and became material creatures, frozen in stasis for all time.

The Brothers of Fire Child decided that these gluttonous Dreamborn would be kept asleep, and crafted rituals to make certain of this. Subtly altering the Songlines, they kept them sleeping, and to this day there are secret ceremonies held to make certain of this. To do otherwise would court disaster, as the half-wakened Dreamborn would likely splinter and become a terrible shattered spirit creature, a broken, hungry thing that would wreak havoc on the Dreamtime.

The Dreamtime was only a heartbeat away. The People needed a way to understand what had occurred, and the Dreamborn needed a place to shelter themselves from the madness of the world. The power of the Songlines, flowing along boundaries and defining tradition and territory, were enough to base an entirely new place upon. This place is known today as the Dreamtime.

The Dreamspeakers, who have studied the Dreamtime since it began, believe it to be a single spirit entity, a massive Incarna-level spirit that stretches the length and breadth of the continent of Australia and across the Torres Strait as well.

TRADITIONS

The Traditions have, for the most part, left Australia alone. This is because the Dreamspeakers seem to be the only ones who can truly link up with the resonance of the land and its people. Oh, there have been a few Verbena who have made the desert bloom, and some of the other Traditions who have made homes for themselves in the shining towers of the coastland cities. But the Dreamspeakers' tradition has worked itself into the warp and weft of the Tapestry in Australia like no other.

Descendants of the Early Ones of the Dreamtime, they are still blending in and taking shelter within the society of the People. Wherever they go, they still seek to keep a sense of wonder alive. They have created Bush Universities, taking the dispossessed youth of the People out of the cities, out into the bush to learn the ways of their ancestors. They have fought long and hard, with knives and guns, and lately, laws and reforms to reclaim the lands that were once theirs.

Ever since the Reckoning, however, the Dreamspeakers have recognized the need to open the Outback to outsiders. Many of the People have read the signs and have predicted this time period: a time when strangers with two heads (mages) would come among the People and take on the learning of the ancients. Encouraging these prophecies is part of the Dreamspeaker's overall goal of renewing the truth of ancient legends and folklore, of instilling a sense of the mystical once again in sacred places and practices. Every mage, no matter what tradition she hails from, reinforces this reality by her mere participation.

To this end, the Dreamspeakers have endeavored to find ways to introduce others gently into the society of the People, creating a spiritual embassy of sorts to help introduce non-Aboriginal willworkers into the Dreamtime paradigm. This slow process has only recently begun to bear fruit. Mages with an introduction into Dreamspeaker society who visit Australia might just find themselves invited on a trip into the Outback, and then deep into the heart of the Dreamtime.

THE TECHOCRATIC UNION'S PERSPECTIVE

Australia has been a central project of the Technocratic Union for some time. Ever since James Cook mapped its eastern shore, the Union has been working on calming this wild, primal place. In order to protect the Crown's interest, many agents of the Order of Reason accompanied the First Fleet to Australia. They spent a lot of time establishing protections against some of the native spirits and other powers that the deportees and their guards faced. Those Guildsmen who moved in with the first settlers performed a full-scale mineral survey, which would one day find fruit in massive mining efforts when they later became the Syndicate.

The New World Order actually conducted espionage against the Axis powers during World War II, and helped to break the complicated submariner's code on German U-Boats. The Void Engineers' Earth Survey team was dispatched to investigate the strange energy patterns inherent in the landscape and localize the phenomenon. The Progenitors conducted complex organic experiments, introducing foreign strains of plants and animals and observing their effect on the landscape. Some Progenitors tracked down rumors of fabled creatures said to live in the Outback. They came under fire from the rest of the Union when a rogue cabal of Progenitors released viral strains designed to weed out the Aborigines and allow the Europeans unfettered access to the continent. It was only quick and extensive intervention by

EARTH SURVEY VOID ENGINEERS

Because of the recent Reckoning, the Void Engineers have had to develop a new Methodology. Actually, it is rather an old Methodology adapted to new purposes. In Renaissance times, the Void Engineers were primarily explorers and travelers on Earth, helping to "strengthen the map" and tie down Terra Incognita. Now, the Earth Survey Methodology seeks a return to the old ways by traveling to remote locations, investigating supernatural and paranormal activity there, and applying the anthropological and archaeological scientific method to them, thereby nullifying any dangerous dynamic magical resonance. Curiously enough, this Methodology has always been in the background as part of the Engineers, but up until now has been considered more of a sideline interest, a hobby compared to the exploration of the Deep Umbra. With the way to the Deep Umbra closed, the Engineers have found a way to maintain their value to the rest of the Conventions, with Earth Survey experts who come into a potentially untamed magical area and thoroughly sterilize it using their scientific techniques.

the Dreamspeakers and some Syndicate agents that saved them from certain destruction (the Syndicate was, of course, afraid of losing the cheap labor pool market of the Aborigines). The Progenitors lost a lot of prestige and led the way in punishing their own, but the damage was already done.

One of the prime achievements of the Union in Australia is the Pine Gap Research Facility. This place is a kind of Australian Area 51, located in a no-fly zone in the Outback. Entire highways, with their attendant roadhouses and small towns, were moved out of the way so that the area could be protected. There is literally nothing around for miles. Even satellite topography does not map this area, due to a restriction hard-coded into most onboard chips. It is a Void Engineer / New World Order stronghold, shared roughly half and half by those Conventions. The NWO listens to radio traffic and monitors signals from the entire Pacific theatre. The Void Engineers use this as a base of operations for Correspondence gating and other forms of transport into and out of the area. Plus, the main feed from Ley Eye-I, their polar-orbit psycho-hyper-spatial Kirlian imaging platform, comes down in Pine Gap and is initially displayed, unfiltered, on giant screens in the Situation Room at Complex B. As a result, for Earth Survey Void Engineers, this is the place to be.

THE OUTBACK

The Australian Outback is one of the most desolate seeming places on Earth. However, if you know what to look for, the land offers enough bounty for the People to survive. It is no mistake, however, that the Europeans have allowed the Aboriginal people to keep vast tracts of land in Australia's

interior. Truth be told, they are probably the only people on Earth who could live there and thrive.

SACRED PLACES

Uluru (Ayers Rock)

Uluru is located in the middle of Australia. It is very sacred ground, a place where three Aboriginal family groups' Songlines cross each other. The power that exists here is extremely deep in the ground, however. Aboriginals prefer that visitors not climb Uluru, for they fear that it will awaken the Dreamborn Ancestor who is imprisoned within the shell of the mountain. Still, tourists frequently climb the Rock anyway, ignoring these requests, and one day it is believed that Uluru will awaken, and it will not be pleased.

Despite the fact that it is located almost dead center in the middle of Australia, the spiritual center for the continent is actually located not far away, within Kata Tjuta, a dramatic series of 36 dome-like rock formations that stand 1,701 feet high and cover a large area. It is atop several of these formations that ceremonies are performed to renew the People's connection to the Dreamtime.

The Kimberly

There are many sacred places in the Kimberly region. The Bungle Bungles are one such place: the site of an ancient Dreamtime battle, the land itself is wounded. Some Aboriginal elders protect the location of the spear-points that made the wounds. Wolf Creek Crater is the home of a giant serpent-spirit who sleeps in the raised ridge that surrounds the crater. Rock paintings exist in cliff overhangs throughout the Kimberly. These areas are part of the holy land that marks the territory of Wandjina spirits, the rainmaker spirits of the wet season that bring fertility to the land.

Wullungnari on the Mitchell plateau is thought to be particularly sacred. There, a Wandjina passed forever into the Dreamtime. There is a stone table in front of a cave there and beneath that stands Walguna, the Tree of Wisdom, Knowledge and Law. This was also a place of great initiation ceremonies that would cleanse the new initiates and prepare them for their duties as intercessors with the Dreamtime.

Coober Pedy

The name means "White Man's Hole." Not exactly a ringing endorsement. Coober Pedy is a torn-up, rusting, wild-wild-west sort of place. Opal mining takes place here. Because regular mining equipment destroys opals rather than actually mining them, the entire opal industry in Coober Pedy has been transformed from a corporate concern to an individualistic concern. Now individual Australians can get a mineral rights claim for an area in and around Coober Pedy. They are then free to use whatever means are at their disposal to uncover opals. Explosives are plentiful and common. Technology is wildly variable: a super-cooled diamond drill derrick might share duty with a good old-fashioned iron pick. Opal miners are always teeter-

ing on the brink of utter poverty, tremendous wealth, absolute insanity, and nasty, explosive death.

The rule of law in Coober Pedy is a fuzzy concept. If people don't like something, they tend to blow it up. Once there was a gentleman who did not like the fact that his favorite pay phone was broken. He then set about blowing up all the other payphones in Coober Pedy so that the phone company would have to come out and replace them all. Trials in Coober Pedy have been moved elsewhere since someone blew up the courthouse because they didn't like the outcome of the legal process.

Men fly into Coober Pedy every week with briefcases full of money and fly out with briefcases full of opals. This is a tax man's nightmare. There aren't many permanent structures in Coober Pedy, but there is a beautiful soccer field, which is kept alive in the desert by irrigation funded by a local tax on beer. People live in caves formed out of old opal mines that have been sprayed down with some kind of hardening agent; a plastic covering that keeps the structure from collapsing. Walking through "downtown" Coober Pedy is like walking through a forest of stovepipes, chimney flues, and ventilation ducts.

The strangeness that is Coober Pedy is a combination of Aboriginal Dreamtime energies (as it is in the Outback), whitefella greed, and the ongoing ecological tragedy that is opal mining. Everyone has an angle, everyone has ready access to guns and explosives, and everyone is just coming off of or going into a three-day drunk.

Things get uncovered in opal mines. Strange things. One fellow came up with an entire case of Marilyn Monroe movies, all of them missing the third reel. Another miner found four ancient scrolls in bone tubes, inscribed with Aramaic. Skeletons of strange animals (not dinosaurs, that wouldn't be strange enough) keep getting found. And then there are many Aboriginal artifacts, which, somehow, do not make it back into the keeping of the Aboriginal governments. Many of these items are on display at various pubs around town.

There is no rail service to Coober Pedy, but there are regular road trains and many brave tourist buses that regularly stop here. One of the jobs you can get fairly easily is as a tour guide, because of the heavy burn-out factor of merely answering questions about opal mining rather than actually doing it.

Ghost Tracks

There has long been a problem with the concept of gauge in Australian railroading. There were three gauges of track built: New South Wales built a standard gauge line, Victoria and South Australia built a broad gauge line, and Western Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania built a narrow gauge line. Slowly, over time, standard gauge lines have replaced these lines, but there are still several places where the old lines lie unused. The iron rails extend off into the



horizon and end abruptly. Some have been capped; some have ended without a cap.

The effect these tracks have on the Dreamtime is quite strange. On one hand, they are unnatural things, and they symbolize whitefella intrusion into blackfella land, into the Land of the Dreamtime. Because of this, the Dreamtime Song sometimes fades as you get close to the tracks. On the other hand, they've been long abandoned — long enough for the Dreamtime to touch them, to infuse them with power. And then came the Ghost Trains. The spirits of the Dreamtime, at play, manifest as strangely constructed trains of collaborative creatures, strange animalistic pictograms made three-dimensional, roiling down the desert on the ancient iron rails that are now obsolete. Passing willworkers can occasionally flag them down or simply hop aboard as they approach, but they must be ready to jump off or risk riding the train straight into the Dreamtime.

Alice's Roadhouse

Alice Gothrough is a mage, a native of Australia, who has established for herself a roadhouse on the long and dusty road between Coober Pedy and Alice Springs. ("Nah relayshun," Alice tells everyone, even before they ask). This

roadhouse is not on any map, nor is it in any of the guidebooks. No tourist buses will be stopping here. In fact, as the tourists roar past, the place seems positively deserted and abandoned. Most of the windows are broken; doors hang open, banging in the wind. The walls reverberate with shrill drones as the wind whistles through them. The old, dead roadhouse looks abandoned and possibly dangerous. This is by design. Alice doesn't like uninvited guests.

Every so often someone gets stranded or a camper van breaks down near the Roadhouse, and Alice holds a contest to see who can successfully resolve the situation so that the Roadhouse's true identity is protected and the hapless tourist dealt with. The winner gets their pick of any of the knick-knacks on the wall, or a free beer, their choice. They usually choose the beer.

Most of the time the winner takes Spot, the ancient rusting Range Rover (kept half-buried by sandstorms around the back of the building), which is resurrected and driven by the smelliest Aborigine in the house, and the tourist is transported back to the relative safety and comfort of Coober Pedy (Alice Springs being a bit too far to drive in a car that is only held together by absolute, radical faith and

a few iron atoms that haven't oxidized yet), where the tourist is set loose on his own. It's thought that some even make it back to civilization, although several have later become opal prospectors.

The actual Roadhouse is underground, and is quite comfortable for a hole in the ground in the middle of one of the harshest deserts in the world. The true value of Alice's is not in its food (which is, actually, quite excellent, if strange: a blend of bush tucker, American fast food, British pub food, and Japanese), its beer (brewed onsite with Alice's personal inspection) or its décor (which is a mishmash of hundreds of years of European civilization plus thousands of years of the People's rock painting). The true value of Alice's is simply this: it is a gateway of sorts, a place where the European mystics and the People's willworkers can meet, chat, and have a drink.

Disciples favor this place because there is a Hermes Portal that still functions, connecting a forgotten storehouse at Sydney University and a back room at Alice's. This is also how Alice avoids the notice of any road trains: if she needs supplies, she simply orders food to be delivered to her warehouse and pushes a pallet mule back and forth through the Portal.

THE ROGUE COUNCIL IN AUSTRALIA

Lately, strange coincidences have been leading mages to Australia. Ever since the Sydney Olympics, messages have been arriving directing mages to travel to Australia and learn what needs to be learned there. It is believed, by those tracking the Sphinx, that the Council must have used the Olympics as a travel cover to hold a face-to-face council meeting. The messages seem to be directing other mages to come to Australia, as well.

For example, one mage received two tickets for a vacation tour in Australia as the winner of a contest, only she never signed up for the contest. Still, when she went in to the travel agent to claim the prize, the registration card was found to be in her own handwriting. She has yet to take the journey, however.

Another mage has been dreaming of Australian-specific fauna living comfortably in strangely juxtaposed locations, such as a koalas climbing the plastic eucalyptus in a board room, a crocodile wallowing in a wading pool in the middle of a subway car, and a kangaroo shoplifting Ding Dongs at the Quickie Mart. These animals seem to be directing him to travel to Australia and meet his destiny there, but he has, so far, refused their call.

The non-Aboriginal Australian mages are quite perplexed by this sudden interest in their little magical backwater. That none of them have received any of these Rogue Council messages seems quite suspicious to most of them. However, Aboriginal mages are surprisingly prepared for the

No one is quite sure to which Tradition Alice belongs. Many just automatically peg her as a Dreamspeaker, and the Dreamspeakers just nod and smile when anyone asks. Some believe she's a Verbena or perhaps an Ecstatic: after all, she definitely enjoys a good party and doesn't spare the generosity when she throws them. But her intensity, practicality, and skill with business seem to point to some other Tradition. There have even been whispers that she was a Syndicate mage who got turned by a Koori Clever Man and struck out on her own, an Orphan.

Alice has clean, comfortable, if small rooms available for the night for cheap, and there are usually one or two doctor or healer-types available staying at the Roadhouse or nearby. She sells basic supplies: cloth, water, water skins, tents and dried food, for those people who want to head off into the Outback from there. Alternate entrance to the Roadhouse is attained by dropping down a shaft in the rotting old roadhouse above, or by finding a cave opening in the side of a hill farther out in the bush. Both ways are seemingly protected and watched: nobody has been able to sneak in undetected yet; even those with high Arcane scores seem to be detected rather quickly. Alice doesn't like to take chances.

influx of non-native Australians and have even held council meetings to discuss what should be done about them.

The first step any mage must take when he comes to Australia on the strength of a Rogue Council message is to make contact with the Aboriginal willworkers, for the non-Aborigines will be politely confused and slightly distant toward unwelcome foreign guests.

Is it possible that the Rogue Council is using the Shallow Realm of the Dreamtime as a base of operations? Or that a secret cabal of the Council has its chantry house in the vast, untamed desert of the Outback?

Furthermore, several Void Engineer Technocratic Union agents have "gone native" in Australia of their own free will in the past year or so, abandoning the Technocratic paradigm and literally reverting to a more non-Consensual form of magical practice, usually as a result of initiation into Aboriginal magical tradition. These defections have followed several outrageously vulgar Spirit Effects, one involving the loss of an entire road train full of supplies. So far, Technocracy reclamation agents have been unable to find and "re-educate" the errant Scientists.

How could this be? What would cause a hardened Technocrat to abandon his precious scientific paradigm? What non-rational processes are at work? Everyone knows that the Void Engineers are the easiest of all the Conventions to subvert: they are used to thinking in terms of other worlds, other possibilities. Is the Rogue Council trying to subvert the Technocracy from within, or is this just a random coincidence?

Because of the sheer concentration of willworkers and the kinds of conversations that take place around tables in the Roadhouse, the Technocratic Union would love to get a mole into her operation, but she tests all employees thoroughly before sharing with them the secrets of the place, such as where it is located. Most short-time employees and many patrons just believe she's somehow dug a secret hole in the

basement of a warehouse in Sydney — they have no idea that the actual Roadhouse is hundreds of klicks away, out in the bush. Regulars all know the truth, however, because of the tremendous numbers of People who pass through on a regular basis, People who would never make it dressed (or perhaps it's better to say "undressed") as they are walking through Sydney.



AND THE BEAT GOES ON: SHAKTI AND SHIVA



Angel walked down the streets of Calcutta. The soft snoring of the street hustlers and the beggars who slept in doorways mixed with the buzz of flies and rustling paper. The oppressively warm air clung like a moist second skin, as a steamy breeze blew in from the bay. Sometimes, the sickly sweet smell of rotting flesh rolled off some beggar's body as he turned over in his sleep, coughing... leprosy. Nothing in the holy dance was sacred any longer.

Dressed in the tattered remnants of her miniskirt and shreds of an overly tight baby-T, the spots of blood all too obvious on the pastel pink fabric, she sobbed, tears making pale, pink lines down her face as the ichor ran off. A smile creased her perfectly formed, blackened face, causing the innocent dimples to show on her midnight-black skin. Resting two sets of arms at her side, she raised two of the limbs in the symbol of the end of the dance, the moon coming down. All was lost for these people. The Mother was coming, and with Her came destruction and a final rest for all the souls of the world. In Oblivion....

• • •

Angel sat on British Airways flight 800, non-stop from Los Angeles to Calcutta. Sipping her rum and Coke she listened to the piped-in "Latest Pop Chart Toppers" on the cheap, plastic headphones the disgruntled stewardess had given her. The sky passed by outside, midnight blue with silver-trimmed clouds. The waves below crested chrome

colored in the light. She just shook her head and kept smiling. She was finally getting to go to India.

India! She giggled to herself. All that hard work of dancing at the club and the occasional "job" on the side was finally paying off. Looking down at her perfectly manicured nails and golden tan, a small smile creased her face. She was going to get to see the true birthplace of her Tradition. Sure, Imara wanted her to check in with some nutball. But how was that any different from normal? She was the hottest girl in the cabal — how else did you get some ancient wizard to give up his all-powerful spells? Show him a little tail and he's all yours. Maybe she would even learn something important; if the reports they got in were correct, she would. Like how to get around the messy Storm. Lord knew what kind of treasures a smart user could find on the other side of the Gauntlet....

• • •

Angel was standing in the lobby of the Hilton next to the airport. She was tired and gritty despite the short walk. Her little suitcase on wheels seemed to weigh about six times as much as it usually did and she was ready to get rid of it. Walking up to the desk, she looked at the clerk from under limp hair.

"I believe you have a reservation for an Angel Rose?"

The man shuffled through his papers and nodded and mumbled something. He took a key out of a box on the wall and slid it across the desk to her, not really paying attention. She took it and started to walk. She looked up and saw there was a bar: Casablanca. She snorted. How much more cliché

could they get? But a drink would go over well about now. Taking a sharp detour, she found herself sitting in a darkened booth with a faux '20s feel. With the cold table under her hand, she ordered a rum and Coke, the drink of champions.

"No charge," said the waiter, as he set the drink down on the table.

She looked up as if she didn't hear him right. "Huh? Excuse me?"

"The gentleman at the bar is picking up the cost, Madame," he said, and scuttled off to wipe a table.

Angel saw the man at the bar. He was short for a guy. Maybe five-foot-eight, about 150 pounds soaking wet. Which would not be a bad thing, because he was obviously cut. *Indian, with decent, charming smile, twinkling eyes. Going to have to watch him. Not to be paranoid or anything — it's not everyday that a guy buys a girl a drink. But who knows how much he's picked up on? Here's hoping he's not a Technocrat.* She smiled back at him by way of an initiation to her table.

He stood up and slid over to her table — "slid" being the appropriate word, or maybe prowled... a jungle cat in human form. *God, I hope he's not a Technocrat. If I can weasel my way into his bed...* Smiling, she moved to the side so that he could make his way into the booth without being inappropriate.

• • •

"Destruction is the way of life."

Angel stared at the handsome Indian man sitting across from her at the table. His brown eyes peered from behind bars of dark lashes. Rajiv sipped his coffee quietly, looking her in the eyes. Throughout the entire conversation, he had never glanced below that level. This man obviously had more class than most.

"Think about it like this: If one looks at the night sky, the first thing one will notice is the brilliant white of the stars and moon. But realistically, there is more blackness around it than the simple light. Over time, even the bright whiteness of the stars joins the black. They are destroyed and become one. The dance of destruction goes on."

Angel thought about this and then posed a question: "If destruction is all there is to life, then why bother? If we can't change that, then why are we here at all?"

Rajiv took another sip of his coffee. "Because from destruction comes a new birth...."

• • •

"They believe that the world should stay just the way it is. No change, nothing. They want everything to be perfect forever," Rajiv said as he slipped from stall to stall in the spice market. The smells assaulted Angel's nose; she was in awe of this place and this man.

"But why are they attacking people, then? That's certainly not stable; that's change to the extreme."

Rajiv stopped next to a booth that contained a giant pile of raw cinnamon and leaned over to smell it. It was pungent, almost like a taste in the back of the throat — not a smell, but almost a feeling.

"Because only in death is there no change," said Rajiv, looking solemn.

• • •

"You cannot trust this man! Do you understand me? Your superiors sent you to me, not to him, and I forbid you to associate with him!" said Jonathan, an obviously colonized Indian man in his mid 50s. He sat behind his impressive wooden desk and stared at her through a set of circular bifocals. This was to be her teacher. The ways of Shiva opened to her.

"My superior?! I don't know who you've been talking to, bub, but Imara isn't anyone's superior. This is my vacation and I'll associate with anyone I damn well please!" She turned from the desk and stormed out the door, her red hair flinging back and forth in a conservative braid. She'd actually dressed intelligently for that pompous ass.

Working her way through the Dakshineshwar Temple, she moved toward the main entrance, walking around the clump of tourists goggling over the statues of the blue-skinned Shiva. *That's the last time I ever listen to Imara and his Internet contacts again. I'm learning 10 times as much from Rajiv....*

• • •

"The city's poor are a result of the East Indian Trade company. Originally, this was a grouping of three villages. Mostly, they fished. They lived their lives close to the land. Then the British came and disrupted that peace. They turned the villages slowly into a metropolis. And then, when they were finished with it, they just let it fall apart. They say that Calcutta is already dead. I don't quite agree; we've just moved further down the line of decay, from being a breathing collection that formed one body, to being a fungus that lives on a rotting corpse. Calcutta won't be dead 'til we are through with it." They passed the Writers' building, the birthplace of the bureaucracy here. You could almost still see the little men scuttling to and fro trying to get shipping orders ready. Angel just shook her head as Rajiv went on. He insisted that one had to know the history of an area before one practiced the way of the Brahma in it.

"Before the British came, the people worshiped the great goddess Shakti. She is a representation of the karmic wheel that we all walk. Her form changes with each age. She was honored, as she had been like us, a Brahman who became a goddess. But sadly, as the wheel turns, she becomes as it is. This is the final age and you will find her in the aspect of this age, Kali, the Destroyer. This is not as horrible as it sounds. It just means that we are that much closer to the golden age. The beginning again." He smiled to look at her. *God, he made even the end of the world sound like a nice place. I'm so glad I stuck with him instead of that old stick at the temple. Now if I could just get him to stop talking history and get him into bed....*

• • •

The world was perfect when she was lying in his arms. Nothing could undermine his safety and strength at this exact moment, and Angel was happy. Happy. She couldn't remember being that way for a long time. Rajiv didn't care that she was a stripper or a hooker. He loved her for what she was. He snored quietly next to her and she cuddled up closer to his amber skin. Smiling to herself, she realized that this was what life was about. Money meant nothing in the face of this. She was actually considering never going back home. The

states held no love for her. Sure, her cabal back home would miss her, but they would understand. How could they not? Happiness was hard to come by, and living here in India with Rajiv...

• • •

The temple was an ancient stone structure. Pagodas laced with lichens and moss shot up through the trees like their very own prayer to heaven. At the lower levels the moonlight shone on the faces of the triadic spirits of Hinduism: Brahma, with his bull head; Shiva, with his calm, almost cold face; Vishnu, smiling benevolently. But this temple was not dedicated to these gods. It was the holy mother to which one prayed here. Gathered around the altar were six priests—six Brahmans. Chanting in unison, they looked upon the goddess Shakti's form for this age carved in the rock. Her tongue wagged out in anger. Her eight arms held the weapons of war. Her feet rose in the dance of victory.

The six men danced and chanted around her image. Thugees of old once held their place, but now their weak forms were Shakti's only strength. Another man, a follower of Shiva, was tied to the altar. He quivered with fear and stared into the harsh flames of the bonfire while begging for his life. But the assembled cultists didn't hear him, or chose not to listen.

"Oh, Holy Mother, our Eight-armed Goddess of Ages, we bring you this Vessel of your Wrath. As your husband smites you, cursing your darkened skin, so do we offer these in appeasement of you. A follower of he who would take your name, seeming, and blessing in vain. May your feet carry you swiftly to us so that we may feel the final yank of the wheel as we turn to the golden age!"

With a swift downward stroke to punctuate his words, the high priest slammed the knife home into the pleading man's heart. His eyes immediately glazed over as his sanguine fluid poured down over the stone alter. It shone in the night like freshly polished obsidian.

That's when the ground opened up and released the goddess in all of her fury. She looked out at the group, smiled, and flew off to the stars. Above them they could see the four guardians of the Brahmans meet her in the air, and they clashed.

Suddenly, above them all, the sky opened up and four suns rose over them.

And Kali was gone.

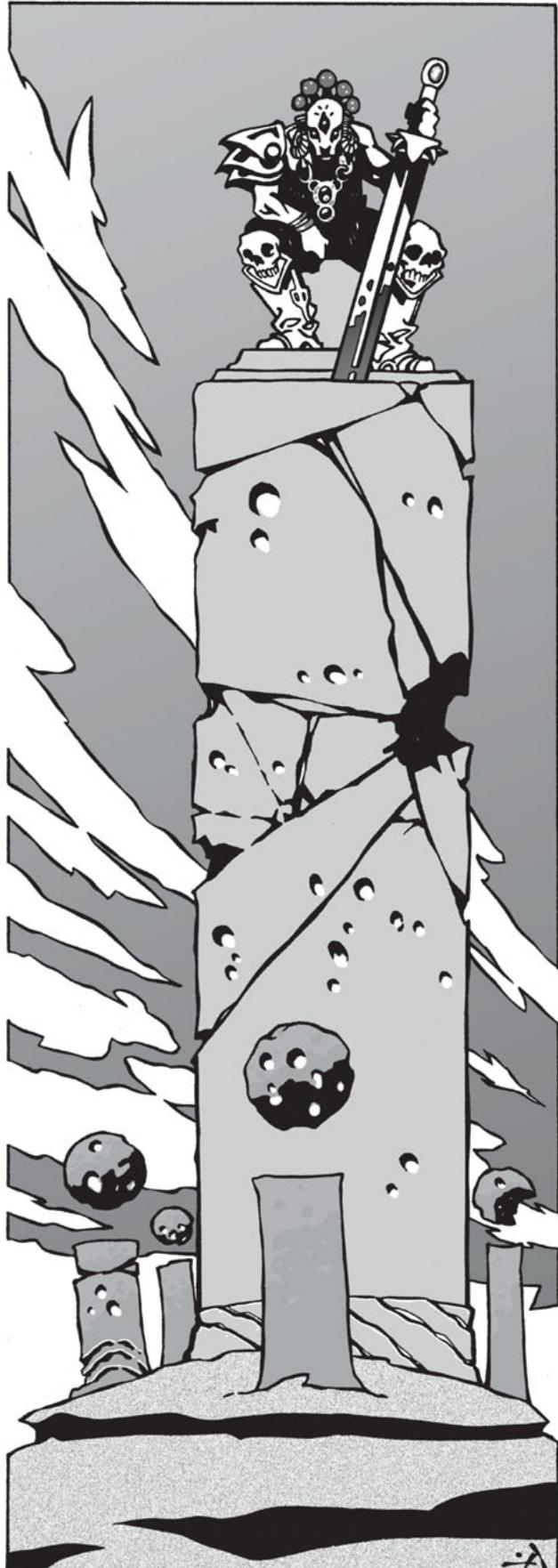
That's when they discovered that, after defeating the four Brahmans of old, she had turned to dismantling the universe from its building bricks themselves.

She was taking apart the Umbra first.

• • •

Rajiv came back to himself from staring off into nothing. Blinking, he looked back at Angel and smiled. She obviously had no idea what he intended to do to her. May Shakti be blessed for her blessing. She was an idiot. It had been so easy to lead her away from the Shrivites. A wink, a few smiles, just a little blessing and she was his.

He sipped his coffee as he looked at her. She had potential — Kali had done well to direct this one to them. He would gladly see to her transformation in the name of the mother.



"So do you see why you have to come to the temple now?"

"You had an actual manifestation of Kali?" Angel stated flatly, her wide eyes looking in wonder at Rajiv.

"Yes, the mother's time on earth has come at last and now we will welcome her for the final dance. I think that your Tradition was founded on waiting for that, am I not correct? When everyone will dance at once and we will all reach the perfect state of being?"

Maybe the old tales about the bottom rung of the caste, the cross breeds being stupid, were true. Who knew, but she was certainly gullible. If all Americans are like this, then the mother should have no problem.

• • •

The four bonfires lit the temple again and Angel stood naked in front of the gathered Thugs. The Kali Temple at Kalighat, in southern Calcutta, was their chosen meeting ground, where they would hold this evening's rite. It had been two years since Kali had started her destruction of the world and tonight they would try their ritual again. This time, however, their sacrifice was this woman, Angel, a fitting handmaiden to their lady of destruction.

She stood naked in front of the men, her skin creamy white under the light. A Bengal Tiger, tied up nearby, roared. Across from her stood Rajiv, his skin painted blue as the summer sky, with a pale white third eye drawn in the center of his forehead. He wore nothing but a necklace of flowers around his neck.

Of the original eight in the rite, five survived. One had died trying to cross over into Kali's path, one had been attacked by the Shrivites on his way home (it was expected, and turnabout is fair play). The final had never believed at all. But that didn't change the fact that this was an auspicious day. Gathered around, they started to chant, and Rajiv and Shakti commemorated their marriage. Shakti in her first form, that of Devi, the wise woman who rode a tiger into battle to fight the bull-headed demon, she who saved humanity from the rule of demons for all time. The lover of Shiva and Wise Woman of the Mountain.

They came together on the altar, forming as one, the perfect union. Power and Usage. Their passion ignited as the Thugs continued in their circle, walking in and out of the light, back and forth in a circle around and around the mating couple. As the passion increased, Angel's yells became higher and higher pitched. The flames of the fires started to reach higher and higher.



India is the world's original melting pot. It has been under almost constant assault since before recorded history. The oldest accounts of the region come from a Greek geographer named Strabo, who documented explorers' tales of India, and yet never visited it himself. The country stretches some 2000 miles from one side to the other and encompasses wonders from dense jungles to striking deserts, all of it cumulating in

As the area became brighter, Angel felt herself changing. Sex wasn't anything new; she all too often took a client after a busy night of dancing. But she found herself becoming part of it. The Deed is a Dance and the Dance called, in her blood, a series of movements that she already knew: Hands are placed here; hips move like this; the legs lock. The mouth opens to scream.

And Everything was Wrong.

There was a ripping in her back and she screamed on and on as Rajiv's face slowly turned into an evil grin. Her body agonized as it turned to whip cord under the strain. Her mind no longer concentrated on anything sexual, but on vicious, bloody thoughts as six new sets of arms reached up to pull Rajiv closer. His face turned to one of agony as she drew him closer with her eight arms while her legs stayed locked and pulled the other way. She continued to pull until he was ripped asunder and his body lay in pieces around her. His phallus hung limp from her sex. She stood up, blood and gore dripping from her naked form. She ran a finger up her belly and licked it sensuously. A wicked grin crossed her face as she stepped off the altar. Her feet left bloody foot prints on the bare stone.

"Don't offer to play the part of my husband if you're not up to the task, Pariah," Angel said, her skin turning black as soot. Her tongue — two inches longer than it was — licked a dot of his blood from her chin.

The other four Thugs fell back in fear. Their goddess had come to them once again, her black form glistening in the firelight, her arms moving seemingly of their own accord around and behind her. Flashes of ghostlike weapons — of skulls, of fire — appeared and reappeared. She wasn't leaving, and she seemed much more real now.

"I believe my first job is to destroy the Four Vedas. Hold still, boys; this will only hurt a little bit."

They fell back in fear, turned to run into the woods, but nothing could save them now. Their goddess was on the hunt.

• • •

The rain continued to pour down the streets of Calcutta as Angel walked slowly into town. She was coming to free them all. Angel did not matter anymore. The Cult of Ecstasy did not matter anymore. The cabal in Los Angeles did not matter anymore. Only her people mattered, and the world is nothing if the Wheel does not spin. And it needs a push....

A BREED APART

a convoluted history that has resolved into a world of poverty with ancient places unexplored since their creation.

There is no one true way to describe India's people. Having gone through countless invasions, the country is convoluted and strange. One can go from a metropolis such as New Delhi to a waterlogged farm in the north, to striking jungles that never seem to end. The people are as mixed as their land, neither united nor separated. They are not so much a grouping of one people, as groups of several peoples all living in a single area.

Hinduism is just as convoluted as its people and its land. A true religion of the people, it started as the worship of Brahma, a bull-headed god of peace and serenity, and spread to encompass other deities as they were encountered. Its current form is a triadic godhead represented by Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the representations of Creation, Stasis, and Destruction. Along with these triadic deities were their associated wives. Originally, they were representations of what the main deities possessed, such as Shakti for Shiva, or Power. With the coming of Tantric practices, they became independent beings of their own.

What truly bound the peoples of India together under one banner is not just the accumulated religion of Hinduism. Hindus have a very humanistic view of their gods and divinities. They have no problem blessing a god when things are going well or cursing them when things are going wrong. On top of this is the caste system, which is still very much alive in India.

GENETIC TRENDS IN GODHOOD

Shiva is the representative of destruction in Hindu myth. Blue skinned from consuming poison at the creation of the world to save humanity, he also represents the transitory nature of death. Throughout Shiva's godhood, despite him supposedly being above sex, he still has an active love life with his wife, Shakti. Shiva, in his aspect of destruction, is the god of the dead and the afterlife. He is the last stage in the cycle of karma and moves people on to new lives as they reincarnate. Hindus do not think negatively of Shiva because he is the god of the dead; he is seen as a good god and viewed as being a necessary part of life.

Shakti is a representation of power. She is passionate and destructive; she is motherly and loving. She is often associated with the other goddesses of the trinity in older myths — not so hard to imagine, since they all were thought of as concepts originally, not actualized personalities. Shakti has eight forms throughout her life. Each one is a different representation of the age she lives on the eight spokes of the wheel. She starts in the first age as Devi, the milky-skinned, calm maiden with a bull head, and then goes through stages of being a mother and a warrior, eventually reaching the final stage, that of Kali, the monstrous destroyer. In myth, Kali is known as the conqueror of time. She is immortal. Some speculate that Shakti was originally a wise woman who was later adapted to fit the role when she gained prominence through Tantric teachings.

Together, Shiva and Shakti form a perfect whole of male and female divinity. Some modern scholars think that they are one and the same, male and female joined together. This goes back to the female deities representing parts of the original gods — for example, Shakti as Shiva's power. For most of recorded history, however, they have been seen as separate beings. Theirs is a symbolic, but typical marriage: Sometimes they get along beautifully and are perfect partners for each other, while at other times, the relationship is stormy. A good example of this is the story of Shakti's desire to mother a child. Shiva didn't see the purpose. He saw their relationship as perfect. But she insisted, and prevailed. Shiva is not portrayed as the most

fatherly person in the world, but he is at least decent to his children, and Shakti tends to compensate by being overly motherly. Their relationship is not perfect, but it is good. Toward the end of Shakti's life cycle, she grows more independent and more inclined to fight with Shiva, but the two come back together when the cycle starts again.

There is one thing in Hinduism, however, that is hard for most Westerners to understand: the caste system. In the caste system, everyone is confined to one of four castes, determined by the family into which one is born. It is a karmic measuring stick. "I was born here because this is where I am in my development." To most Westerners, this appears to be an excuse for discrimination, especially when faced with certain facets.

In the caste system, there are four main castes, and then the one that is not mentioned. The first four castes are based on the Vedas, or ancient religious teachings of Hinduism, and on socio-economic means. At the top of the scale are the Brahmins, or holy men. The class below them, the Kshatrias, are warriors and administrators. The caste below them, the Vaishyas, are farmers, merchants and artisans, and below them are common laborers and servants, or Shudras. Below them, however, fall the Dalits, or "untouchables." These people — according to some statistics, 240 million of them, or 25% of India's population — are considered dirty, polluting influences, and experience extreme discrimination in employment, housing, and human rights.

STORYTELLING ON THE WHEEL

Hinduism offers a great number of myths on which to base a story. A lot of it is just a matter of research, but we've provided some simple storylines that could be used by your group. Don't be daunted by the amount of "canon" material that has been done on India in the past. In general, you as a Storyteller can take it or leave it as you want. Just because there is a major show going on doesn't mean that there aren't a great deal of minor shows going on around that one big show. Take the time to read over some myths and get creative. Some possible sources for these are your local library; one can usually find books of Hindu myths. Another place to look is the Internet, keeping in mind that what is found online should be taken with a grain of salt; it is easy to type into your search engine of choice whatever you happen to be looking for.

The first thing that any Storyteller will want to consider when deciding to write a story based in India is the climate, be it political, social, or seasonal, at the time of the tale.

India of legend was a land of mystery and wonder, where Naga changed from humans to snakes and lived as one with the people. The gods walked the land, battling and loving each other as they intermixed. There were ancient temples in the jungles and holy men wandered the land preaching to the masses. Enlightened men sat under trees in perfect contentment with the world. Salazar sat in the Taj Mahal and told erotic tales to a sultan. Images from the Kama Sutra roll through the mind, contrasting with the smell of rotting almonds as people die of leprosy in the streets. It was a vicious land of savage beauty, yet cultured to the extreme.

The modern perceptions of India are not so bright, however. All one has to do is watch CNN for a week or two and eventually something ugly about the Indian sub-continent is bound to appear. Today's discussions turn to thoughts of nuclear and physical war. With a population of over a billion people, the thought of India rising to be the next superpower is truly frightening to most Westerners. Less than 20 years ago, their prime minister was assassinated. The general population lives in poverty while an elite upper class hoards the wealth. Overall, it shouldn't be an easy time for characters in campaigns set in India. Visiting a country in the midst of a political crisis is risky. They will need a lot of money or a lot of contacts to get around efficiently, and to get the things they might need.

Many of the older myths of Shakti and Shiva are coming more and more into play in the World of Darkness. The triadic basis of Resonance can be found here in the form of the triadic godhood of Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu, representations of Entropy, Creation, and Stasis. These are the end times for much of the world, so the roll of Shiva is growing in popularity all the time. Hindus tend to have a different view on the end times than most Westerners; they don't see it as ending but another stage that the world must go through. If a cabal runs around screaming that the world is ending, the people just shrug.

BECOMING DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

Paradigm is important to anyone practicing magic. The view a mage holds of the world is one of the keys things in his Awakened life. In order to envision a new structure of reality, a mage must change that reality. It's never easy and should not be done in one day. But it can be beneficial.

Shaktists are very focused on themselves. All power comes from within. That within is a blessing of the goddess. Through concentration, a mage can make what is within become what is without. This is not an easy process. Along with this belief comes the goddess's view. In this final stage of the wheel she is Kali—destruction in its purest form. In order to become destruction, one has to destroy, whether it be lives, property or social structures. It's the end of order and life. A mage has to become a part of that while somehow reasoning out his own survival.

Shivites have an easier time of things. The lord of the dead is a well-respected figure in India. Almost every culture on the planet has a god of the dead. This concept is not so hard to fit into most paradigms. The big problem is that it's mainly a matter of quiet contemplation. Shiva is not a loud god; he is a god of honor and respect. He leads the life of an ascetic. All worldly pleasures are forgotten in pursuit of oneself. It's a subtle shift, but can be difficult for a Westerner.

INDIAN ROTES

CHAKRA INFLUENCE

[••• LIFE OR ••• MIND OR ••• PRIME]

In Tantric practices there are seven Chakras, or power points, in the body. One in the genitals, one in the stomach, one in the sternum or solar plexus, one in the heart, one in the throat, one in the third eye, and one at the crown of the head. These seven power points are like small engines that fuel the life of a person, coming down from the Heavens through the body and exiting in the form of exertion. This rote allows a mage to control his Chakras and those of others to his own ends.

System: This multipurpose rote is designed to be a way of controlling a body via a certain paradigm. You could easily enhance someone's sexual arousal via the Bottom Chakra (Mind •••), or you could silence someone's voice with the Chakra in the throat (Life •••), dull their emotions by using the Heart Chakra (Mind •••), or even close off their Pattern's Quintessence flow by closing the chakra at the top of the head (Prime •••). This rote is multipurpose and could be used for any variety of means to control someone. It is sometimes Vulgar, depending on its use.

Body Placement	Color	Spheres
Genitals	Red	Life ••• or Mind •••
Stomach	Orange	Life ••• or Mind •••
Sternum	Yellow	Life •••
Heart	Green	Life ••• or Mind •••
Throat	Blue	Life •••
Third Eye	Purple	Life •••
Top of Head	Gold	Prime •••

DEITY FORM

[••• FORCES, ••• LIFE, ••• PRIME,
•• SPIRIT, OPTIONAL ••• ENTROPY]

The mage can actually become an Earthly avatar of a god. The mage has phenomenal cosmic power — for a while. Paradox eventually catches up with her, bringing her back down to Earth — hard.

Nonetheless, this makes for a most impressive religious display and may spur a renewal in the god's religion or cult.

System: When first cast, the mage feels fantastic, suffused with power. It gives him a number of Effects at once: **Friction Curse** (Mage revised, p. 166) or **Telekinesis** (p. 167) to represent the deity's raw power, **Better Body** (p. 171) to boost Attributes, **Mutate Form** (p. 171) to take on the aspect of the deity (multiple arms for Kali), **Wellspring** (p. 185) to replenish power, **Spirit 2** to call the deity, and, optionally, **Entropy 5**, to renew the deity's worship in the modern world — reinvigorating the very idea of that deity among those who witness its avatar.

It requires a minimum of 10 successes to achieve the Effect, which lasts for one scene. Additional successes can extend the effects and damage of the various powers listed above.

The downside of this rote is that it is extremely Vulgar.

KARMAIC INVERSION [•••• PRIME, ••• LIFE]

This rote represents one of the possible ways that mages in India have found around Kali's dance of destruction. It allows a mage to take the damage he would normally suffer from an encounter with the Avatar Storm and shuffle it off on another mage. This usually ends up killing the recipient of the shuffled damage.

It first requires the mage victim to be linked to the caster's Pattern through a gruesome ceremony of torture, bloodletting and abuse.

System: The mage uses Prime and Life to tie his Pattern to that of another person. This requires an extended casting during which the mage must elicit pain from the victim to be linked to him. He must also mix his blood with that of the victim (he may want to first be sure that the victim doesn't carry any diseases). The number of successes required is equal to the Arete + Willpower of the victim — it is much harder to link to a highly enlightened Master than to a newly Awakened apprentice. Once linked, whenever the mage steps sideways and suffers Storm damage, it is delivered onto the rote's victim instead. This rote only works on those with Awakened Avatars — in other words, only a mage can act as victim.

The very act of casting this rote on another mage causes the caster to gain one dot of Entropic Cruel resonance. If the rote causes the victim to die from the damage suffered, the Resonance becomes a level of Jhor. The caster reeks of blood magic and is on the slow decline to corruption. This rote is almost Nephantic in nature and could be considered the gateway to corruption. Player and Storyteller be warned.

LOVE ME, LOVE ME [••• LIFE, •• MIND]

The perfect seduction is more than important to a cult that sacrifices people. There is no easier way to get someone to the altar block than making him think that he wants to go there. And there is no better way to lead him than his libido. This rote is usually cast by the mage upon himself in relation to a certain person. A guy would cast it on himself to make himself more attractive to a female. The physical body takes on small changes to make itself more attractive to another ideal. Nothing major occurs, like complete rearrangement of cells or change in hair color; just small changes, such as a clearing up of acne or a slight change in vocal tone.

System: This is a cumulative effect. It starts with a basic meeting where the first Mind Sphere scan is done on the subject and Life magic adjusts to appeal to him. Slowly over time, the person who it is cast upon changes to be more liked by the person who it is connected to. In game terms, this means that the mage gains more dice over time for Appearance- and Charisma-based rolls.

A first encounters provides +1 to Appearance, the second gives +1 to Charisma, and further encounters each add one more bonus, alternating between the two traits depending on the nature of the encounters. The total bonus provided between both Traits is equal to the number of successes rolled on the casting.

Just like with any other social interaction, the difficulties can go higher depending on how the last encounter went. If a character is completely unattractive to a person, then his difficulty is going to be considerably higher.

This rote is coincidental.

STORY IDEAS

A FIGURE IN THE MISTS

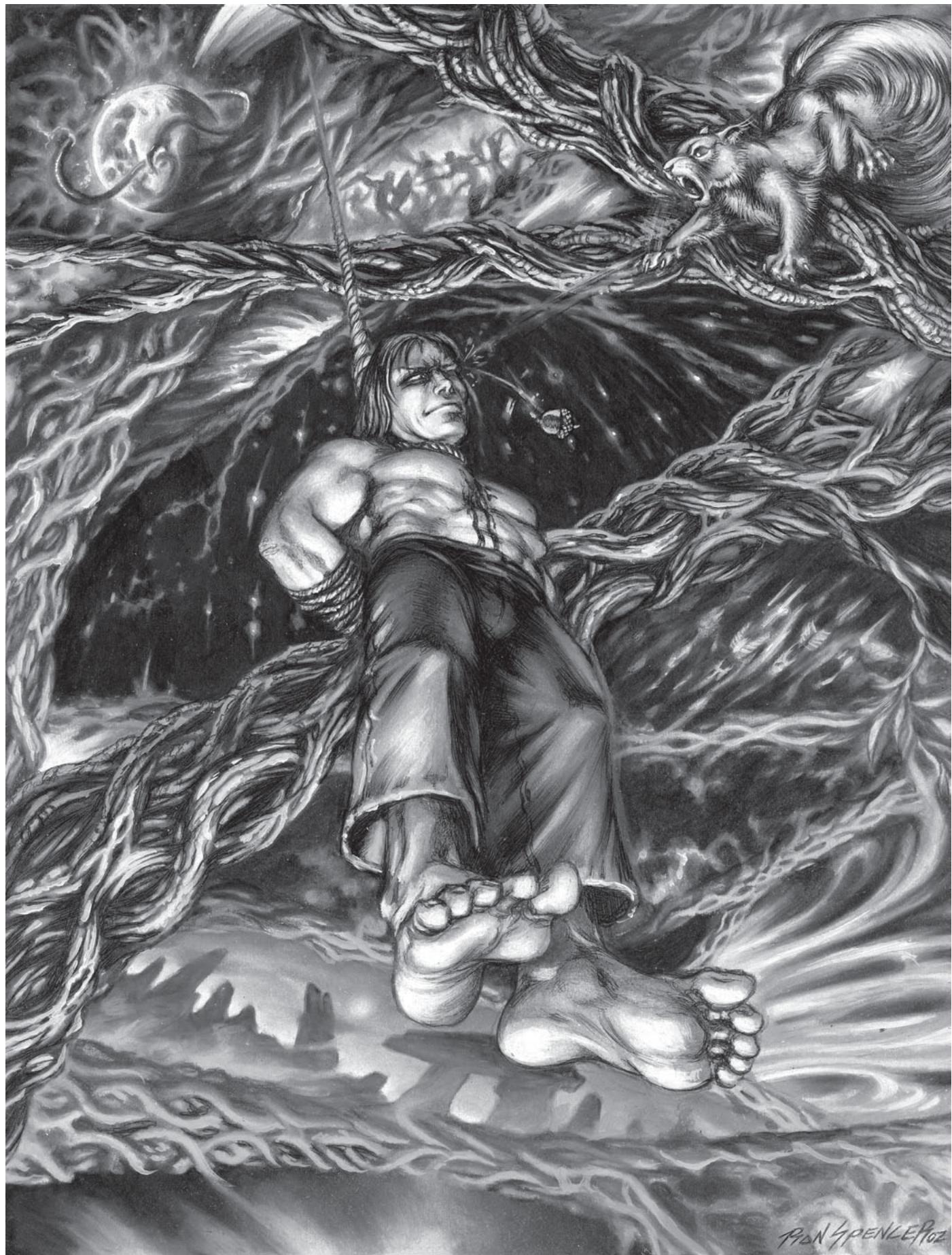
While near a graveyard, a minor Rudra, the child of Shiva and Shakti, is seen hunting what appears to be demons. If asked and questioned, he directs the cabal to the Umbral destruction, stating that his mother has started too soon. He asks the cabal to help him hunt the demons attracted by the destruction who now threaten a small town. During this, the cabal learns more of the rite that brought Shakti, or at least a incarnation of her, into this world, possibly from a demon or an eyewitness. Either way, it leads the party to discovering the basic situation from a cultist's view.

THE DESTROYER HAS COME

A town is now under the attack of the Destroyer. Black-skinned, devil-tongued and eight-armed, she walks around mindlessly killing and is currently cutting a swath across the area, trying to reach some unknown goal. Time is the enemy for the cabal as they try to track down this mysterious thing and find out what it is. As an added pressure, there could be a famous mage who has slipped into Quiet while casting the Deity Form rote (see above). It could be a Marauder ripping her way across the country. The possibilities are endless. What could she be searching for? In myth, Kali had eight ancient weapons, one for each arm. She also had a necklace of skulls. Could this being, whatever it is, be searching for its weapons? The conclusion and methods are up to the Storyteller, but this could be an ongoing quest.

RUMORS IN THE MACHINE

Word has come down from your superiors that the Technocracy is actually holding a cabal of Shaktists hostage. The rumors are that the stories coming out of India about the nuclear blast are true. If they are, and it was all a Technocracy cover-up, the cabal might be able to blow the whistle on them and possibly convince even Technocratic agents of the kind of yoke they've been under. This has the possibility of being a world-changing event in the mage storyline and a story of titanic proportions.



IN THE SHADOWS OF THE WORLD ASH, THE NØRSE

He spoke of memory, and now he walked in memory as well. It was as though a veil had been torn aside and now he saw the old world, the land where myths had slain one another for sport and spite, until the day when the final battle had come.

— Christopher Golden, *Hellboy: The Bones of Giants*

THE HANGED MAN



The squirrels are talking to me.

Well, OK, a squirrel. But I'm pretty sure it's a sign I've been out here for too long.

It's my own damn fault, I guess. I just had to traipse half way around the world to The Middle of Nowhere, Norway just so I could come out here and hang myself from a tree. I've lost count of how long I've been out here. It must not be nine days yet, or else Kristen would've cut me down by now.

Bad enough I'm out here bare-chested in the cold, but throw in the complete lack of food and water, as well as the ritual bloodletting by spear point, and I'm pretty sure I've gone into hypothermia. But then that was supposed to be the entire point. Hanging from an ash tree, suspended — literally — between life and death.

I must not be paying enough attention to the talking squirrel, because now he's throwing nuts at my head.

“Cut it out, you little furry bastard!”

Until this moment, I'd never in a million years thought it possible for a squirrel to actually look indignant.

“Bastard?” The squirrel turns its nose up at me. “I am Ratatosk, little hairless monkey, and I am quite sure my pedigree has fewer holes in it than yours.”

“Ratatosk? The squirrel that lives in the branches of Yggdrasill?”

“Ah, you've heard of me then? Good. This means you are not a complete imbecile after all.”

I roll my eyes. “Yes, I've heard of you. I read about you when I was eight years old. Ratatosk the squirrel, lives in the branches of the Yggdrasill, where he sees all and tells all.”

He actually begins to preen. “That's me. Ratatosk, the great learner of all secrets and bringer of wisdom, hero of many an epic saga.”

"More like Ratatosk, the nosey busy body and incurable gossip who appears in children's bedtime stories," I reply.

Another nut hits me in the forehead.

Ratatosk fixes me with a stern gaze — well, as stern as a squirrel can be — and lectures.

"You are the one who came here looking for wisdom, monkey boy. Be grateful that one as knowledgeable as I has come down here to offer you that which you seek. A thousand years ago, one of you gallowsmen would've been honored by my presence. These days all you do is whine and mock me."

If I didn't know better, I'd swear he was starting to pout.

"Fine," I reply, "Thank you, great and wise Ratatosk for answering my summons. I welcome any wisdom you see fit to offer one such as myself."

"Much better," the squirrel chirps. "Now, come along. We have much to see and much to learn, but not much time in which to do it."

"How am I supposed to get down from the tree?" I inquire.

Another nut hits me in the forehead, and I suddenly fall to the cold, snow-covered ground bellow.

"Hey!" I yell.

I struggle to my feet, brushing off snow as I look around for my obnoxious little teacher.

"Any other foolish questions?"

I turn and see Ratatosk perched upon... my shoulder?

My body continues to hang from the branches of the ash tree, although I am no longer in it. As I look around the clearing, I see that Kristen continues to sit wrapped in her blue cloak, still spinning thread with her spindle. She seems completely oblivious to my conversation with the talking squirrel.

"You are no longer in the world of flesh, gallowsman. You are in the world of mist. Of mist and memory. And of myth."

His beady little eyes are actually twinkling.

THE GOD OF THE GALLOWS

"How much do you know about the ritual you undertake?" Ratatosk asked, leaping from my body's shoulder to the forest floor.

"I know that Odin, the All-Father, pierced himself with his own spear and hung from the branches of Yggdrasil for nine days and nights, all so that he could learn the secrets of the runes and become the god of magic."

"Close enough," the squirrel muttered as he climbed my pants leg. "Odin is the ruler of the gods, builder of the world and maker of men. All men's magic comes from him and his teachings. And the All-High's thirst for mystic knowledge is unquenchable. He summoned forth the spirits of the dead so that he might glean prophecies from them. He seduced the giantess Gunnlod so that he could steal from her keeping the mead of poetic inspiration, which granted those who drank it the power to speak words of prophecy and wisdom. He took the

goddess Freyja as his mistress so that she might teach him the womanly arts of seiðr, or witchcraft. He cut out his own eye so that he could drink from the well of Mimir and learn the secrets of ørlög, the understanding of wyrd. And finally, the All-Father starved, bled and hung himself from the branches of the World Ash, Yggdrasill, suspended between life and death for nine days in order to learn the secrets of the runes.

"But Odin is more than just the One Who Guesses Correctly and the Very Wise One. He is also the Gallows God and Glad of War. He is the Terrible One, the Worker of Evil and the One Who Blinds With Death. Men do not worship Odin; they fear him. In the old days, all men feared the powers of magic. Not only are they mysterious and dangerous to the uninitiated, but in these lands they are dark arts as well. The magic you seek to learn is intimately tied to the lands of the dead, for the god of magic is also the god of war and death."

I smile at Ratatosk. "You have that speech memorized, don't you?"

He harumphs. "Be quiet while I'm talking, monkey boy, or I'll leave you back on the tree where I found you."

"Sorry."

"In order to learn Odin's secrets, you seek to mimic his trials and torments. You offer yourself to the All-High as a sacrifice, just as Odin sacrificed his own body to himself. You seek to learn the power of the runes, and these I will teach you."

"And just how did you learn the secrets of the runes? I don't recall hearing about squirrels ever hanging themselves."

His eyes twinkle again. "I am Ratatosk. I see all that occurs among the branches of Yggdrasill. When Odin hung himself, I watched. And on the ninth day, when the runes were revealed and the All-Father snatched them up, I was there, and I also learned the secrets of the runes."

"So while Odin did all the work, you waited around and took advantage of his sacrifice for your own gain."

"Of course I did," he snaps. "I am Ratatosk, and it is my duty to witness all that happens in the World Ash. And you have no idea how hard it is to do nothing but sit and watch a starving man hang from a tree for nine whole days. And unlike your friend there, I didn't have any spinning to keep me entertained while I waited."

WOMEN'S MAGIC

"Speaking of spinning, you would be wise to pay attention to your friend's crafts. The magics of women are powerful and subtle, though most of them are not for men to learn."

"Why is that?"

The squirrel laughs. "You came here seeking the power of the runes. Why? Because that is the magic you have heard of. Most know the stories of how the runes hold power. But you do not come seeking the same magics your friend practices. You wish to become one of the gallowsmen, not one who wears the cat-skin hood and gloves."

"You're still not answering my question."

"And you are still interrupting me. You know of the runes because men learned and used them. And much of history is what the men wish to remember. You hear of this land and you think of the voyages of the Vikings, the reigns of kings and the sagas of warrior gods. Often men who think themselves more clever than they are will ignore women and what they do. They presume that women have always been the quiet meek creatures they expect them to be."

"And presumption is the mother of all fuck ups."

"Exactly!"

He's getting into this now, which would be strange enough on its own but it looks like Ratatosk is one of those people who talk with their hands. The sight of a talking squirrel standing on a forest floor, waving his arms around as he lectures me on the battle of the sexes is an image that will haunt me for the rest of my life, I'm sure of it.

"Women are clever, and they are good at keeping their own secrets from the eyes of men. That includes the secrets of women's magic."

"Why do I sense another speech coming?"

Another nut hits my forehead.

"Quiet. The magic of women has always been tied to their roles in human society. On the one hand lie those arts that are intimately intertwined with the woman's traditional duties. These are the arts of the *spá-kona*, or spá wife. The *spá-kona* knows the secrets of spinning and weaving magic into thread and cloth, as well as the arts of healing and the intuitive understanding of the threads of wyrd spun by the Norns. On the opposite side lies the ways of seiðr working, or witchcraft. These are the magics of cursing, commanding the weather, and summoning the dead. The arts of seiðr working are those most feared by men, as they not only go against a woman's "natural place" in society, but also because they provide ways for a woman to avenge herself upon her enemies and to vent her frustration and anger. And that is something feared by any man who has greater sense than that of a goat."

"So the magic of women is that of wife and witch."

"Yes. You aren't as stupid as you look after all. The magic of men flows from Odin, but the two aspects of women's magic each come from a different goddess. Frigg is the wife of Odin and goddess of childbirth and marriage. She is the greatest of *spá-kona* and is her husband's equal in the powers of magic. She is queen of the arts of healing, weaving and prophecy. Frigg knows the destiny of all things, but keeps this knowledge secret unless she needs it."

"The ultimate housewife."

"Do not mock, gallowsman. When the men go off to war, it is the women who work their farms, oversee their towns and ensure the prosperity of the household. And when the men return, it is the women who bind their wounds and make sure they even have something to come home to. The role of housewife is ancient and sacred. Those who dismiss its importance, be they men or women, are fools."

"In contrast to the wife and mother that is Frigg, Freyja is Odin's mistress and lover. She is the greatest of seiðr workers, and the goddess of fertility and sexuality. The arts of illusion, shapeshifting, weather magic, cursing and necromancy are hers to command. She taught these tricks to the All-High, and in return he taught her the secrets of the runes."

"I thought you said the runes were men's magic."

The squirrel laughs at me. "Ha! They are, but they are women's magic as well. Odin's wife and mistress both learned the secrets of the runes from him, and in turn, mortal women learn them from men. The *spá-kona* uses them to heal and protect her family. The seiðr worker uses them to curse and destroy her enemies. Someday, some pretty young thing might come to you looking to learn the magic of the runes. And if you wish, she'll teach you some of her arts as well. I'm surprised your friend over there hasn't already told you of this."

"How do I tell the difference between a *spá-kona* and a witch?" I ask, ignoring his comments about Kristen.

For the second time in my life, a squirrel laughs at me. "You don't. Many women are both. The arts of the *spá-kona* can hurt as well as heal, and seiðr can be worked to aid men as well as to punish them. In the sagas, any woman skilled in magic was called a *spá-kona* simply so that her name would not be smeared with accusations of working seiðr."

"Calling her a wise woman instead of a witch."

"Exactly."

"But if seiðr working is women's magic, why would I want to learn it? And come to think of it, if Odin learned it, why is it still considered women's magic?"

"Ah, now you are actually starting to ask questions of importance. Why would you want to learn the arts seiðr? Perhaps like the All-High you seek to emulate, you will simply have the thirst to know it simply to know it."

"Learning for learning's sake?"

"Yes, but you are interrupting again. The arts of seiðr may also prove useful to you. This is a dangerous world you live in, gallowsman, and it has become even more dangerous now that you've decided to cross over into the twilight world of gods and monsters. The runes are powerful, yes, but someday you may find that you need a trick that the runes cannot do. It is then that you will be glad to have learned more womanly arts."

"And womanly arts they are, for they follow the ways of women. It is the way of men to be direct and straightforward. To openly confront whatever stands before them. The ways of women are more subtle. A woman does not challenge a man to combat with sword and ax. If a woman seeks satisfaction when a man has wronged her, one of her own men — her brother, husband or son — will fight in her place. But if no man can stand for her, she seeks satisfaction through other means: poison, curses, and madness. To women, these means are seen as perfectly sensible. Why try to outfight someone when you can outsmart them? To men, these means are seen as dishonorable, because they go against the way a man is expected to do things. If a man learns such arts, he is seen as being less of a man."

“And that’s why there’s so little about Norse magic in popular culture? Everyone wants to hear about the Norse as noble manly men, who settle their problems with sword and fist instead of using magic.”

“Very good, gallowsman. We may make a magician of you yet.”

WYRD

The squirrel continues. “Of course, it is your wyrd to become a rune wizard. Else you would not be here today.”

“Weird?”

“Wyrd. Fate and destiny. The life path of all men as spun by the Norns. You do know who the Norns are, I hope?”

“Refresh my memory.”

Ratatosk sighs theatrically. “The Norns are the embodiments of wyrd, and lay out the destiny of all things. They are three sisters. Urð is That Which Is and represents the past. Verðandi is That Which Is Becoming, the present. And Skuld is That Which Should Become, the future. All that was, that is and that shall be are known to them. The Norns are spoken of as both spinners of the threads of fate, echoing the spinning and weaving arts of the *spá-kona*, and as keepers of the bubbling cauldron of destiny, representing the practices of *seidr* workers.”

“Like the Weird Sisters from Macbeth?”

“Not like. Are. They *are* the Wyrd Sisters who lead Macbeth and the others to their inevitable fates. The arts you seek to learn are not just found here. They still hold subtle influences over the lands of the Black Forest and the Danelaw as well.”

“Germany and England?”

“As you call them these days, yes. But we are getting away from the subject at hand.”

“And that is?”

He rolls his eyes at me. “Wyrd. The inescapable power of fate.

“You are a wizard now, and the greatest of all magical knowledge is the understanding of wyrd. Not only your own, but the wyrd of all things. And by knowing, you might influence it, however slightly. *Spá-kona* understand these things instinctively, for that is the way of women. Watch your friend’s spindle whorl. See how it reflects and scatters the light. It helps her to focus her mind and better read the threads of wyrd. Men must work harder to understand the ways of destiny. The runes may help you in this. They have the power to divine the doings of the present or past, and thereby allow one greater understanding of the future. If you learn the ways of *seidr*, you will be able to summon up the spirits of dead women and have them read the threads of wyrd for you.”

“Why am I beginning to wonder if men get the raw end of the deal here?”

Ratatosk chuckles. “You would be surprised, gallowsman, how often that truly is the way of things when it comes to magic.”



OTHER GODS

"What about the other gods?" I ask. "Kristen told me they were important."

"Oh, they are. But they are not gods of magic. Still, they are worth knowing, for sometimes one can work magic by calling upon their favor."

"Thor the Thunderer is the god of thunder and war, and slayer of monsters."

"Him I know."

"No, you only think you know. You imagine the Thunderer as blonde-haired and beardless, perhaps? He was a mountain of a man, with the fieriness of his hair, beard and eyes matched only by the fieriness of his temper. In most ways, Thor was the ideal warrior: mighty in war, boisterous in temperament, and steadfast in his loyalty to his family and friends. However, Thor also has the patience and good sense of a small, excitable child. His hammer, Mjollnir, was an object of great and terrible power. All the forces of chaos and darkness feared both it and its bearer's wrath. So great was this fear that symbols shaped in Mjollnir's image were used to ward against evil. This power still holds, though often it must be bolstered by a magician's own power."

"Baldr was the god of wisdom, beauty and sunlight. He embodied the rebirth of Spring and the warmth of Summer. He was the most beloved of the gods, and his murder was a great tragedy."

"He was killed by mistletoe, wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was. A warning to those who might dismiss or overlook something vital because it is so small and easily forgettable, but also very symbolic. Mistletoe hangs between the worlds of life and death, much as you do now. It is also a symbol of Winter."

"The god of Summer killed by the symbol of Winter."

"Yes. And when the world is reborn in the aftermath of Ragnarok, Baldr will also be reborn. As the son of the All-High, he will take his dead father's place as king of those gods who survive."

"The embodiment of goodness and life slain through treachery, only to return and rule after the end of days. Sounds like Jesus."

"Indeed," the squirrel says. "And even one as wise as I am unable to tell if such is coincidence or if it is the result of two cultures intermingling."

"Tyr," he continues, "was the god of law and justice. Tyr was called upon to bless and protect things, local assemblies where matters of law were decided, as well as to provide victory in battle. Even today, many wizards ask him to oversee their gatherings. But Tyr was also a symbol. The stories and sagas of the gods are ultimately the story of order versus chaos. Tyr is the ultimate symbol of that order."

"I remember something about Tyr. A story about losing a hand?"

"Ah, yes, that. That is Tyr's most famous story, and also his most important. When the gods sought to bind the great demon wolf Fenris, they were forced to use treachery. The gods swore

false oaths, telling Fenris that they would free him if he could not escape the bonds they had crafted for him. The demon agreed, but only if one of them agreed to place their hand in his mouth. Only Tyr would agree to this. When Fenris could not escape and the gods refused to free him, Fenris bit Tyr's hand off."

"And the god of law was maimed, because the gods had broken their oaths."

"Yes. Now you are starting to understand. Gods, ultimately, are symbols. Frigg and Freyja of the twin roles of women. Thor of the thunder in the sky and the clash of arms in war. Baldur of the beauty of Spring. Tyr of the law. Odin of the mysteries of death and magic unknown to most men. There are even those who believe that Thor, Baldur and Tyr are only separate faces of the All-High's various aspects. Thor the embodiment of his father's strength and his role as god of war, Baldur of his father's wisdom, and Tyr of his father's role as king. But it is not for me to say if such things are true."

"What about the others?"

"Oh, there are others, yes. Not all are tied with Odin, of course. Freyr, for instance."

"Any relation to Freyja?"

"Yes, he's her brother — and sometime lover."

"Come again?"

The squirrel smirks. "Freyja is a woman of incredibly sexual appetites. You should hear what she did to get her necklace, Brisingamen. But that's not important right now. Freyja and Freyr are twins. They are Vanir, the old gods whom Odin and his fellow Aesir replaced. Some say they are the last memories of the Celtic gods the Germanic peoples drove out. Others have their own opinions about such matters. I will speak more of them later. For now, only Freyja and Freyr concern us, for they dwell in As-Garth with the Aesir. They are both fertility gods, and Freyr was the god of plenty and prosperity. He would be called upon to bless marriages and to provide good luck and excellent harvests. A few, in this day and age, associate Freyr with the Horned Man, and his sister with the, in my opinion, generically named Goddess. Such theories have credence, but they are not important for the magics you wish to learn."

"Volundr, on the other hand, is. In the Danelaw, he is remembered as Weyland. He is the god of the forge. Volundr learned the secrets of his art from the well of Mimir, just as Odin learned the secrets of understanding wyrd. Where the All-High sacrificed his eye, the Smith God crippled his own leg."

"I've heard something like this before."

"I am not surprised. Many gods of the forge are crippled gods. The art of metal shaping is ancient and magical. In the ancient days, the forger was one who was vital to a village's survival. They work magic in their forges, gallowsman, and you would be wise to learn those arts as well. Those who follow Volundr's path know the secrets of the runes as well. They carve them into their works, creating items of great power."

"And finally there is Loki."

"I've read about him."

"You've read about more than a mad man wearing a green suit and poor taste in head wear, I hope."

"Give me a break here. I read more than comic books. Loki Fire-hair, the trickster god who'll lead an army of giants and ghosts against the gods at Ragnarok."

"That's part of the story, yes. Loki is the trickster and chaos bringer. I said before that the stories of the gods are the stories of order struggling against chaos and darkness. Loki is the embodiment of chaos, and so is not one of the gods. But he is Odin's blood-brother, and so he is allowed to dwell among Odin's people. Although he is a troublemaker, Loki also uses his cunning and wits to aid the gods. He even accompanies Thor on several quests. Random chance works in his favor. But in the end, Loki's murder of Baldur proves too much and he is sentenced to eternal imprisonment and torture beneath the earth. When Ragnarok comes, he will be freed and will lead the armies of darkness against the gods."

CLIMBING YGGDRASIL

Ratatosk turns and begins to scamper across a fallen tree.

"Come, gallowsman. There is still much to see and not much time to see it."

I step onto the log, chasing after him.

"Where are you taking me?" I ask.

"Into the branches of Yggdrasill," he replies, not bothering to look back. "Try to keep up. It would be unwise to lose your way here."

"How can I get lost? I'm in the woods with you and Kristen."

"Not anymore, gallowsman. You are in the world of mist now, remember?"

It's then that I notice the log is no longer a log, but is instead an enormous ash branch. The clearing with Kristen and my body is gone, as is the entire forest. All around is nothing but an endless expanse of giant branches.

My reaction is an example of rapier wit for the ages.

"Crap."

The squirrel begins another lecture. "Yggdrasill is the World Ash. It is the framework of all that is, and within its branches hang all the realms of the universe."

"How can you find anything in this maze?" I ask, annoyed.

"I am Ratatosk, and I know every secret path through the branches of Yggdrasill," he answers indignantly, "and if you keep quiet, I might actually bother to teach you some of them."

"The World Ash does not simply hold up the universe, it connects all that exists. All that is, all that was and all that shall be are connected by Yggdrasill's branches. By traveling its paths, you may walk among the past and present, as well as into the realms of the gods or even into the hearts of men. All things are connected by the World Ash, and through it, all things are connected to each other."

"Like the Law of Connection?"

"As some modern wizards call it, yes. Others have different names for it, but those do not concern us now. Come, we must climb higher. I must show you the other worlds."

THE NINE WORLDS

"Mid-Garth lies at the center of the universe. It is the Middle Earth, also called Mannheim, the land of men. You know this world best, for it is your home. It is also the world where men belong. Leaving Mid-Garth is not something be undertaken lightly. Great wisdom can be found beyond, but also great danger. But you are a gallowsman. You, more than any other, should understand that those unwilling to risk danger and death have no business seeking wisdom in the first place. Some have forgotten this. They have become soft and have forgotten the risks one must accept as part of being a wizard. Part of your duties, gallowsman, will be to remind them of this simple truth. If one's wyrd decrees that he will die that day, it will not matter if he is in the heat of battle or hiding under his bed like a child. He will die all the same."

"You're talking about the Storm, aren't you?"

"Yes. Bifrost, the Rainbow Bridge which connected Mid-Garth with As-Garth, the God Home, has been shattered. Those who attempt to cross over into the lands beyond Mid-Garth risk injury from its countless shards."

"But what shattered it?"

"Look, here, below us, what do you see?"

"It looks like the Earth, like I'd see it from space. Except... it's surrounded by water."

"Yes. Mid-Garth is surrounded by a great and endless sea. And within that sea lies Jormungandr, the World Serpent."

"The sea is a symbol. In truth, it is the shadow world that surrounds Mid-Garth. Just as water reflects that which is above it, the shadow sea reflects what is in Mid-Garth. To pass into the land of shadow is to pass into a reflection of Mid-Garth. What dwells there are reflections of life, echoes of ideas and shadows of the past."

"You mean spirits and ghosts?"

"Yes. In times of war and strife and death, Jormungandr thrashes within the shadow sea, and the shadow world is thrown into turmoil. Now, the World Serpent thrashes yet again, worse than ever before. And in his fury, he has shattered Bifrost."

"But if Bifrost is broken, does that mean there's no way to get to As-Garth?"

"No. Only that the safest and most well-guarded way is gone, and that the realm now drifts lost among the branches of Yggdrasill. Those who seek the God Home now must quest for it, and must follow more dangerous pathways to find it."

"What of the other worlds?"

"Oh, they are still there, gallowsman. Most of them, anyway."

"Vanaheim is home to the Vanir, the gods from before the Aesir. They are creatures of the earth and the oceans, and they were old when men were very young. The sagas tell many stories of the gods of As-Garth. This is because the All-High

and his clan are much like men, and their ways are understandable to men. The Vanir are almost never mentioned, because their ways are strange and alien to the minds of men. They are not simply the gods of the sea or of the mountains — they *are* the seas and mountain. If you ever journey to Vanaheim, you will find yourself in a land in which the trees and the rivers and the very earth itself thinks and speaks and, if need be, acts. The Vanir are mostly forgotten to the world of men, but sometimes, those who know the proper way to call upon them are able to work great and terrible changes upon the very land itself."

"So what makes Freyja and Freyr different from the other Vanir?"

"They are spirits that represent the place of men and women within nature. Because of this, they are the most human of the Vanir, and so came to dwell among the Aesir in the halls of As-Garth. Njord was also understanding to the ways of men, for he was the god-spirit of the sea and its bounty, as well as of the relationship between the sea and men."

"So they relate to people better because they represent what people do?"

The squirrel simply nods and begins a trek along a different branch.

"Gods are not the only things which live among the branches of Yggdrasill. There are also the Lords of Light and Darkness."

"The what?"

"The Kindly Ones, gallowsman. The Fair Folk."

"Elves?"

The squirrel sniffs. "As their watered-down and bastardized memories are known among your people, yes."

"Alfheim is the home of the Alfar, the Lords of Light. They are as beautiful as the summer sun, but as heartless as the winter frost. Theirs are the ways of illusion and madness. Freyr and Freyja dwell among the Alfar at times, and both know the secrets of the Fair Ones' magics. Some seiðr workers learn such tricks as well, and are all the more feared because of it. Alfheim was once near As-Garth, but has become shrouded in mist and is now lost among the branches of Yggdrasill. A few of the Alfar still walk among the hidden corners of Mid-Garth. They use their powers of illusion and shapechanging to appear as mortals."

"In the darkness of Svartfheim dwell the Svartalfar, the Lords of Darkness. Some are as beautiful as the night sky, but many of their number have grown bent and twisted down beneath the earth. The Svartalfar rarely concern themselves with the doings of mortals, save when they wish to take some poor unfortunate down into their mounds and barrows."

"Kidnapping?"

"Yes. The Alfar do this as well, simply for their own amusements. Those who are taken by the Kindly Ones are never the same if they return. Many go mad. A few sometimes return blessed with a greater understanding of wyrd, but they are few in number and frequently mad as well."

"And then there is Nidavallir, home of the Nidavellim."



"Let me guess...."

"Dwarves, as they are mostly known in this age. When Odin crafted the world from the corpse of the great giant Ymir, maggots burrowed into the giant's dead flesh. These things grew to become the Nidavellim. They are short, ugly creatures, but they are the greatest of smiths and craftsmen. After Volundr first learned his art from the well of Mimir, he then went down into the halls of Nidavallir to further master his craft.

"I have not been to Nidavallir in many a season. When last I saw the Nidavellim, some had begun to master arts beyond that of simple craftsmen. They followed in the footsteps of mortal artificers, some even going so far as to replace parts of their own stunted flesh with wonders of iron and gold. I know not what might have grown from this in the years since I have witnessed it."

Ratatosk leaps to a nearby branch and I have to scramble to follow him.

"I have shown you the lands of gods and of men, and the lands of the non-men. Now, gallowsman, I will show you the lands of monsters."

"I don't think I want to see the lands of monsters," I mumble under my breath as I try to keep up.

"What you want does not always matter. You would do well to remember that. Far too many of your kind forget, and it becomes their doom. One does not become a wizard by only looking in the bright and safe places. The path you have chosen is a perilous one, and you must have your eyes opened to the dark and dangerous corners of the world if you hope to survive."

The branch leads out of the maze of tree limbs, and below I see what looks like a great rocky plain. Stretching in both directions, as far as the eye can see, is a great wall so big that it staggers the imagination.

"Welcome, gallowsman, to Jotunheim, the home of the giants. When Odin crafted the world, he built this wall to seal the giants away from Mid-Garth and the lands of men. For untold ages, it has stood firm and held fast."

It's at that moment I notice the giant gaping gap in the wall, as if a wrecking ball the size of a moon had crashed through it.

"But no longer," the squirrel continues. "The wall has been torn down, and monsters walk the earth."

"Wait, how could giants be loose on earth? Wouldn't someone have seen them?"

"It is the way of men to often ignore that which they do not wish to see. There are many things that lie hidden in the dark corners of the earth, away from the eyes of men. But the giants? No. For too long have they been locked behind the walls of Jotunheim. They no longer remember the secrets of walking among the worlds of flesh. Instead, the Jotun are now forced to take on the bodies of mortals. They reawaken recently dead flesh, and use the bodies to advance their own dark purposes."

"What, like zombies?"

"No. And not like the accursed Draugr either. The Jotun seize the body just as it dies, so that they may keep it alive.

They are dangerous foes, gallowsman. When you return to Mid-Garth, be wary.

Down below Jotunheim you will find the well of Mimir. It is the well of ultimate knowledge. Odin gave up his eye for the right to drink from it. Someday, you may be called upon to make a similar sacrifice in the name of knowledge. As I said before, the way you've chosen is a way of self-sacrifice and pain."

Ratatosk begins to backtrack along the branch, following it further down into the darkness. As we go deeper, the branch becomes slick with ice, and I have to struggle to keep my footing.

"Down here, gallowsman, is the land of darkness and ice — Niflheim. It is the home of the disgraced dead. Those who die of poison, disease and old age."

Below lies an endless expanse of darkness and ruin. I see the remains of battered and fallen buildings, buried in ice and snow. A storm, greater than any I've ever seen, thunders across the landscape.

The squirrel speaks in quiet tones. "Niflheim has never been a pleasant place. It is cold and dark, and a land of pain and torment. The dead who dwell there are assailed by countless torments, many born of their own pain and self-loathing. But now this storm blows across the land. I have seen storms such as this in days past, but never before have I seen one of such force. Even now, it drives some of the dishonored dead out into the lands of Mid-Garth. It is an ill omen, gallowsman. No good can come of this."

"Come. We must go deeper down."

"How?" I ask. "I don't see any branches below us."

"Yggdrasill is more than branches. It is the World Ash. Like all trees, it has roots as well as branches."

The squirrel moves further down into the darkness.

"Here," he says. "Here is one of the three roots of Yggdrasill. We are beneath Niflheim now. Here, beneath the lands of death and darkness sits Nidhogg."

Further down the root I'm standing on, I see it. A great black snake, too large to measure. It sits coiled around the root, its huge fangs driven into the wood.

"Since the beginning," Ratatosk whispers, "Nidhogg has gnawed upon the roots of Yggdrasill. He will not stop until the day his poisons bring about the death of the World Ash, and with it, the death of all that is. See the worms that borrow into the root? They are Nidhogg's children. Once they were the damned souls of Niflheim, but they found their way down here into the hidden spaces beneath the dark home, and Nidhogg remade them in his image. Now they exist only to eat away at the World Ash."

"Beware though. Not all of Nidhogg's children come from Niflheim. Even men wise in the ways of the hidden world have found themselves remade as one of Nidhogg's worms. Come, we must leave now, before we are noticed."

Ratatosk turns and flees back up into the branches. I follow as fast as I can.

"Come, we will warm ourselves here for a moment."

The heat is incredible. I feel like I'm standing next to a blast furnace.

"This, gallowsman, is Muspellheim, the home of doom and devastation."

Below us is nothing but fire and smoke pouring out of endless fields of volcanoes and lava beds.

"Nothing can live in Muspellheim," the squirrel continues. "Nothing save Surt, the lord of destruction, and his children, the fire giants. Someday, perhaps, you might have cause to come here again. There are runes that protect one from fire, but only one who is very powerful and very wise can resist the fires of Muspellheim. When the day of Ragnarok comes, Surt will set the World Ash ablaze, and no force will be able to stop him."

Sweat pours off of me, and all I can think of is part of an old poem.

"Some say the world will end in fire...."

"And some say in ice," the squirrel picks up. "In this land, they are both right. The fires of Muspellheim and the ice of Niflheim will be the end of all things."

"We must keep moving. There is one more place I must show you, then we must return to the clearing."

HOLLOWED AND EMPTY HALLS.

The branches of Yggdrasill are gone. In their place is a great feast hall, the size of a football stadium. A completely empty football stadium.

"Where are we?"

"In the halls of Valhalla, gallowsman. The great hall of Odin and his champions."

"It's Viking heaven, isn't it."

"A simplistic way of looking at it. Those who die in battle take their place among the halls of As-Garth. Half go to Freyja, along with the souls of women. The other half come here, to Odin's hall and become his champions."

"Why does Freyja get half of them?"

"Some secret agreement between a king and his mistress, perhaps. Even I am unable to learn the truth of this."

"OK, so if this is where Odin's champions hang out, where are they?"

"Gone. Freyja's hall, Sessrumnir, is empty as well. As to where they have gone, I know not. The Einherjar, for that is what Odin's champions are called, are destined to fight in Ragnarok. They will fight beside the gods against the armies of the Jotun and of the dishonored dead. As I told you, the Jotun now walk the earth. Perhaps the Einherjar have also gone to Mid-Garth to seek them out and do battle."

"The Einherjar's absence is yet another ill omen. If they have truly vanished, then it means that the forces of As-Garth will be all the weaker when Ragnarok comes. But if they now walk the Earth, it is a sign that the final battle will not take place here in As-Garth after all. Instead it will be fought in Mid-Garth, and that means you, gallowsman, and

those like you will be caught up in the battle. If this is true, then you must be ready. If you are not, if you allow yourself to become distracted, you will be crushed."

"Distracted by what?"

"There are always distractions. Always."

"How the hell am I supposed to know what to not get distracted by if you don't tell me?"

The squirrel just shakes his head. "You must figure that out for yourself, gallowsman. This is a hard road you have chosen, and walking it means making many hard choices."

"Come, we must return to the clearing."

I chase after him. As I blink, the hall shifts and once again becomes the endless maze of branches.

RAGNAROK

Ratatosk sits perched on one of Yggdrasill's limbs. Quietly, the squirrel begins to speak.

"Ragnarok is the end of all things. It is inescapable, for it is the wyrd of the world. This event was foretold long ago, and it will come to pass. No force within the Nine Worlds can stop it. The armies of Jotunheim and Niflheim will march against the armies of As-Garth and Valhalla. They will clash in glorious battle. The Thunderer and the World Serpent shall slay each other. The Great Fenris will devour the All-High. In the end, all will fall. Surt will set the World Ash alight, and all that exists will be consumed in fire. And then all will begin again. A handful will survive, and they will build the world anew."

"At least, that is what was foretold. Things, I fear, may no longer be so simple."

"What do you mean?"

Ratatosk looks downcast. "Things are not occurring as they were foretold. As I showed you, the halls of Valhalla now lie empty. Bifrost has been shattered and As-Garth is set adrift in Yggdrasill's branches. Niflheim is wracked by storms and the dead escape into the world of the living. And the Jotun are now free to walk Mid-Garth. This is not as things should be."

"Things fall apart; the center does not hold."

"Yes," the squirrel replies. "What was meant to unfold with a certain order has now been corrupted by Chaos."

"What happened?"

"As I said before, after the murder of Baldur, Loki was imprisoned. He was locked down beneath the mountains of the earth. There he was to remain, bound and tormented until the day of Ragnarok. The earth would shake and Loki Fire-Hair would escape his prison. He would gather the up the Jotun who are his kin and the armies of Niflheim's dead, for they serve his dread daughter Hel, and together they would march against As-Garth. They would free Loki's son Fenris and rouse his other son Jormungandr from the bottomless depths. An army of chaos set against an army of order."

"Trust the embodiment of Chaos not to follow the way things were written. Loki has escaped his prison, gallowsman. The earth shook and the Chaos-bringer walked forth from

beneath the greatest of mountains. As one of the old gods walked Mid-Garth, storms and death and madness followed in his wake. And then in a flash of fire and light, Loki Fire-Hair vanished. But he has freed the Jotun from their ancient prison and loosed the dead upon the earth.

“Ragnarok has begun, gallowsman. It is being fought now, in Mid-Garth. Even now, the All-High looks down upon Mid-Garth with his single eye, watching the battle. But Loki has tangled those threads that dictated how Ragnarok was to unfold. Even now, the threads may be so tangled that the world will not be reborn once Ragnarok is over. If this is true, then we face the greatest of dooms. But all need not be lost. As I told you, you and your kind are gifted with the power to influence, however slightly, the threads of wyrd. You may be the ones who can untangle the threads. But Loki knows this as well. I fear he will work his deceptions to distract you from those tasks you must perform.”

“How?”

“I cannot say. Loki is a clever one. Even more clever than myself, I fear. Perhaps his schemes will become clearer in time. Or perhaps not. Only by being wary can you hope to see past his deceptions.”

TAKING UP THE RUNES

“Now, gallowsman, the time has come. I will teach you the powers of the runes and arm you for the coming battle. Not all of the power will come at once. You must meditate upon them. Become familiar with their strength and power. And learn to sing them.”

“Sing?”

“Yes, *galdr*. Rune-singing. The power of the runes may be carved, but they may also be sung. Odin was the god of poetry as well as magic. Our poets must sing, for they rarely write things down. Can you sing, gallowsman?”

“Yeah, I’ve been in a band for a few years.”

“A good one?”

I’m actually discussing my day job with a talking squirrel. I now have a new benchmark for the surreal.

“Depends on who you ask, I guess. Mostly heavy metal stuff. A few covers. None of that White Power shit, though.”

“Good, good. Too many fools try walking the path of Odin for all of the wrong reasons. But we are getting distracted.

“The runes are powerful things, and that power may be invoked by speaking them. As you come to better understand the runes, you will grasp more and more of them, and better learn how to speak them. It will take much practice before you fully master them, and from time to time you will have to return here to the lands of mist to better ponder them.”

“Why here?”

“Because here in the land of mists, there is nothing to distract you save that which haunts your own mind. That is why you hang yourself on the ash tree. This is the land

between life and death. Between worlds. Your friend does the same when she uses her spindle whorl to better ponder the threads of wyrd.”

“Getting caught up in the threads, the way I’m hanging between two worlds?”

“Yes,” Ratatosk chitters. “Now, listen carefully, gallowsman, as I teach you the secrets of the runes.”

The squirrel locks me in his gaze, and as he begins to speak, his words are drowned out. In my head, I see the shapes of each rune one by one. In my ears, I hear a roar like thunder, as words of power are burned into my memory. I learn words that heal and words that destroy. Sounds that can shatter stone and that can charm the hearts of women.

The force of it overwhelms me, and I fall backwards, off of the branch and into the void.

DOWN TO EARTH

I hit the ground face first.

Water splashes across my face. I suck in air like a drowning man snatched from the waves, only to collapse in a coughing fit.

“Welcome back to the land of the living,” a voice says in accented English.

I look up to see Kristen standing over me, wrapped in her blue cloak.

I can feel the noose around my neck, loosened now that I’m no longer hanging from the tree branch.

“It has been nine days now,” she continues, “and you haven’t had any food or water the entire time.”

I cough more as I take the water she offers me.

“Thanks,” I rasp out.

“Your vigil was successful,” she says, not as a question. “You have learned the secrets of the runes.”

I nod, the sounds still ringing in my ears.

“You don’t sound surprised,” I tell her.

She smiles. “As I told you before you began, your destiny was to find the runes or to die here while trying. It is the way of these things. And did you learn anything else?”

“Yeah. More than I was expecting, I think. Something big is happening, or is about to happen. Something big and bad.”

Kristen nods. “Such is what I’ve discerned as well.”

I struggle to my feet, trying to remember what the hell I did with my shirt and jacket.

“When we get back to your house, I’ll tell you everything I can remember over breakfast.”

“Excellent,” Kristen replies as she gathers up the last of our gear. “But shower first, before you eat. It’s been over a week, and I don’t want you smelling up my furniture.”

And so with a laugh, the two of us start walking back to civilization.

NORSE MAGIC



The world of the Norse was, by modern sensibilities, a harsh and often unforgiving place, so it should be no surprise that it produced equally harsh and often unforgiving magics. Much of the modern view of Norse culture focuses on their roles as warriors, pirates, merchants, explorers, shipwrights and sailors. Although their gods are well known, most are known more for the roles they are given in television shows, comic books and other forms of popular media than for the actual myths about them. Less well known are the more shadowy aspects of Norse culture. Few treatments of the Norse focus on their diverse magical practices. Even the rune lore popular among numerous modern subcultures only scratches at the surface.

The reasons for this state of affairs are many. Magic was seen by the Norse as a dark and unwholesome practice. Although not considered evil, the arts worked by Norse magicians were frightening and disturbing to most people. It was the province of the gods and of the dead, and it was dangerous for mortal men and woman to risk such powers. Secondly, much of the popular focus on the Norse culture has focused on the male side. The stories of the Vikings, kings and male gods have long dominated the average person's introduction to the Norse. While Norse men had their own arts and magics (the arts of the runes, of song and of the forge among them), the majority of Norse magical practices were viewed as a woman's craft. Men who took up these arts were seen as unmanly (or even homosexual).

This chapter is meant to provide a window into these shadowy arts. More specifically, it is meant to provide information for those who wish to incorporate aspects of Norse culture and magic into their *Mage* chronicle. While great care has gone into researching this material, what you see here is not an anthropological text, nor is it a guide to any modern practices derived from Norse beliefs. This is a sourcebook for a roleplaying game and should be accepted as such (large parts of Ratatosk's discussion are as much metaphor as they are mythology). The material here is, first and foremost, meant to be used for your entertainment.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE (FOCI)

As with every other form of magic, the practices of the Norse require tools and other special objects. Each of these objects holds certain ritual or symbolic significance, and helps to channel the Norse mage's magical powers. Norse magic traditionally follows four specific paths, but wizards were frequently known to follow more than one path. Many *spá-kona* would learn certain arts of seiðr working, and both would learn some of the secrets of the runes (most often from husbands or lovers). Male wizards were also known to learn the arts of seiðr working (however, there do not appear to be any records of men learning the ways of the *spá-kona*).

BEYOND MAGE

Players familiar with some of White Wolf's other World of Darkness games will no doubt be aware that the cultures and beliefs of the Norse have and continue to exert a certain measure of influence over various supernatural factions. However, *Dead Magic 2* is a sourcebook for *Mage* and not for these other game lines. An entire book could be written about Norse magical practices and how they apply to *Mage*, and with only a single chapter to devote to the subject, space is limited.

Those looking for information on how the Norse legacy influences other denizens of the modern World of Darkness should see *Clanbook: Gangrel (Vampire: the Masquerade)*, *Tribebook: Get of Fenris (Werewolf: the Apocalypse)*, *Kithbook: Troll and The Book of Lost Houses* (both for *Changeling: the Dreaming*).

Those seeking more information on the Norse during the height of their influence and in the period after should see *Wolves of the Sea* (for *Dark Ages: Vampire*), as well as *Dark Ages: Mage*.

SPÁ-KONA

The arts of spinning and weaving form the cornerstone of the *spá-kona*'s art. A *spá-kona*'s most prized possession will be her spindle whorl. A spindle is a notched length of wood used to spin fibers into thread. The whorl is a weighted flywheel used to regulate the spinning speed of the spindle. While mundane spindle whorls can be made from almost any substance, a *spá-kona* will make her whorl from amber or jet ("black amber"). Amber is a sacred material, believed to be the tears of the goddess Freyja. The whorl is highly polished, and sometimes cut so that its surface is faceted like a gemstone and produces a minor strobe effect when used. The spindle whorl serves as one of the primary foci for the *spá-kona*'s craft, especially for magics involving weaving and understanding wyrd.

By focusing her magic through her spindle and whorl, a *spá-kona* is able to bind numerous effects and rotes into the thread, and further refine such magic through the act of weaving the thread into cloth. In effect, the acts of spinning and weaving serve as extended rituals for her willworking. In addition, the *spá-kona* can weave numerous Talismans and other Wonders (the most famous of these are the *görmingstakkr*, or witch's shirt, and the Raven Banner). Red, blue, black, white and gold threads are those most used for magic-working, red thread and cloth being especially useful in healing magics.

The needle is also a valuable tool in the *spá-kona*'s art. Most prefer needles made of high quality bone, ivory or horn, as well as those made of gold. By embroidering rune patterns into cloth, the *spá-kona* may further enchant those items she creates.



The healing arts are, perhaps, the most universal of women's magics. At their most basic, the *spá-kona*'s healing abilities involve the same use of herbs and other natural medicines known to all wise women. In addition, the *spá-kona* also makes use of rune magic in her healing. These runes are used to ease childbirth, neutralize poisons, heal wounds and protect against curses. Women do not sing the runes as men do. Instead, they carve them into mystic amulets and stones that protect the bearer from evil magic and aid in healing.

Ørlög means "primal law," and refers to the way things will be laid down. To understand ørlög is to understand the threads of wyrd. A *spá-kona* has a natural and intuitive understanding of ørlög (think of it as women's intuition), and with it is able to foresee visions of the future. In some cases the present and past may be seen as well. Female seers, both *spá-kona* and seiðr workers, frequently carry a wooden staff. This staff primarily serves as a symbol of office, marking the carrier as a seer and prophetess, but can serve as a focus for additional magical effects as well.

SEIÐR WORKING

According to the sagas, seiðr was the mystical art of the Vanir, and was introduced to the Aesir by Freyja. In many ways, seiðr is shamanic in nature. A practitioner will allow herself to be possessed and ridden by numerous ghosts, spirits and even gods. These spirits will be summoned through the use of ritual chanting known as *vardþokur* (sadly, there does not appear to be any

record of the words of the *vardþokur* chant in any of the sagas). An alternate form of chanting, known as *gand*, is also used in spell casting, especially for spells in which a seiðr travels outside of her body. This chanting is not the *galdr* (rune singing) used by male wizards. Instead it is a rhythmic chanting used to focus the practitioner's mind and place her in a trance-like state. Sami shaman do the same using the rhythmic beatings of their ritual drums, and seiðr worker prophetesses will sometimes rap their staff against the ground for similar purposes.

Most female seiðr workers also possess a cushion stuffed with hen-feathers. This cushion typically rests on a high chair or even a scaffolding, known as a *seið-hjallr*, and from there the seiðr worker will perform her magics of spirit summoning and *gand reið* ("chant riding", or out-of-body travel). The seiðr worker also wears a cloak — usually blue — and a hood and gloves made of cat skin (the cat being a sacred animal of Freyja). By wrapping herself in the cloak and hood ("going under the cloak") and performing the *vardþokur*, the seiðr worker becomes as one who is dead, and is able to send her spirit out of her body and walk between the worlds of life and of death. Men who practice the arts of seiðr working do not use the hen-feather cushion or *seið-hjallr*. Instead, all of their out-of-body travel is performed by "going under the cloak," which is usually a blanket or animal hide rather than the blue cloak.

The knife is another tool to the seiðr worker. It enables her to carve runes into wood (or if need be, flesh) and to bleed herself to empower the carved rune. Seiðr workers will also

make use of a brewing cauldron to create poisons, potions and other works of alchemy and herbalism, as well as for sympathetic magics. Like the Wyrd Sisters from *MacBeth*, the cauldron represents the rolling mass of wyrd that the seiðr worker's magic seeks to influence and manipulate.

RUNE MAGIC

The more masculine arts of rune magic focus around, naturally enough, the runes. The oldest known (and most commonly used today) form of the runes is the Elder Futhark. See the sidebar for complete details on these runes.

Most rune mages will handcraft their own set of runes. Those who do not often use sets passed down as heirlooms. Ash wood, stone and deer antler are the most frequently used materials, though bone is sometimes used as well. The wood or antler is cut into disks of similar thickness, while the stone must be polished down. Each of the Elder Futhark runes is carved into its individual piece, resulting in a set of 24. The set is then carefully stored in a bag made of leather or cloth.

The most basic use of the runes is for divination purposes. A set of runes (usually three in number, though nine are

sometimes used as well) is cast on a cloth, or in some instances upon the ground. The runes grant the caster a better understanding of the present, and from that he is better able to deduce forthcoming events. The runes can also be carved into wood, stone, horn or other materials to create amulets and other talismans, or to create wards of protection.

However, the greatest effects are always cast through the use of *galdr*, or runesinging. In Sæmund's *Edda*, Odin speaks of eighteen songs of power and describes the effects of each when sung. The Norse rune mage knows these songs and uses them to perform magical effects.

SONG AND CHANT

It is important to note that while both male and female mages understand the powers of the runes, they use them in different ways. Both will affix them to items, either by carving, painting or other means. However, in speaking the runes, the two paths diverge. Women will only chant or speak the words, never sing them. Only men will perform *galdr*, or runesinging.

THE ELDER FUTHARK

F *Fehu* (“fay-who”)

Meaning: Possessions

Magical Themes: Prosperity, wealth, social advancement.

N *Uruz* (“ooo-rooze”)

Meaning: Strength

Magical Themes: Strength, physical power, defense, transformation, primal force.

P *Thurisaz* (“thoor-ee-saws”)

Meaning: Giant (or Thor)

Magical Themes: Destruction, violent defense, thunder and lightning, applied force.

F *Ansuz* (“awn-sooze”)

Meaning: Signals

Magical Themes: Communication, inspiration, creative energy, spiritual knowledge, social influence.

R *Raidho* (“rye-though”)

Meaning: Journey

Magical Themes: Quests, seekings, spiritual journeys, the search for justice.

K *Kenaz* (“cane-awze”)

Meaning: Torch

Magical Themes: Creation, craftwork, applied energy, passion for one's work.

X *Gebo* (“gay-boe”)

Meaning: Partnership

Magical Themes: Joining, generosity, partnership, hospitality, union, the subconscious mind.

P *Wunjo* (“woon-yo”)

Meaning: Joy

Magical Themes: Harmony, fellowship, well-being, pleasure.

H *Hagalaz* (“haw-gaw-laws”)

Meaning: Hailstone

Magical Themes: Change, disruption, chaos, social upheaval.

- ᛗ **Naudhiz** (“now-these”)
 - Meaning:** Need
 - Magical Themes:** Problem solving, self-reliance, resistance to hardship, aid, fire.
- ᛁ **Isa** (“ee-saw”)
 - Meaning:** Ice
 - Magical Themes:** Control, stasis, self-awareness, cold, darkness, ice.
- ᛘ **Jera** (“yare-awwe”)
 - Meaning:** Harvest
 - Magical Themes:** Reward, prosperity, natural cycles, taking advantage of previous hard work.
- ᚦ **Eihwas** (“eye-wawz”)
 - Meaning:** Yew Tree
 - Magical Themes:** Endurance, protection, initiation, enlightenment, connections between two counter elements (such as life and death or earth and sky).
- ᚦ **Perthro** (“pear-throw”)
 - Meaning:** Dice
 - Magical Themes:** Luck, chance, cause and effect, hidden mysteries, divination, the wyrd.
- ᛗ **Elhaz** (“ale-hawz”)
 - Meaning:** Elk
 - Magical Themes:** Communicating with and calling upon spirits and gods, traveling beyond Mid-Garth.
- ᛘ **Sowilo** (“soe-wee-low”)
 - Meaning:** Sun
 - Magical Themes:** Guidance, hope, honor, salvation, wholeness, light, the Sun.
- ᛖ **Tiwaz** (“tea-wawz”)
 - Meaning:** Tyr
 - Magical Themes:** Justice, law, order, good judgment, self-sacrifice, righteous victory in battle.
- ᛘ **Berkano** (“bear-kawn-oh”)
 - Meaning:** Growth
 - Magical Themes:** Beginnings, rites of passage, the cycle of birth, life and death, life changes.
- ᛘ **Ehwaz** (“ay-wawz”)
 - Meaning:** Horse
 - Magical Themes:** Teamwork, loyalty, partnership, fertility, travel.
- ᛘ **Mannaz** (“mawn-nawz”)
 - Meaning:** Man
 - Magical Themes:** Self-understanding, intelligence, rationality, memory, the link between mortal and divine.
- ᚱ **Laguz** (“law-gooze”)
 - Meaning:** Flowing Water
 - Magical Themes:** Primal life energy, organic growth, virtue, vitality, masculinity.
- ᛞ **Ingwaz** (“eeeng-wawz”)
 - Meaning:** Earth
 - Magical Themes:** Potential energy, rest, gestation, stability, fertility, future prosperity or growth.
- ᛘ **Dagaz** (“thaw-gauze”)
 - Meaning:** Day
 - Magical Themes:** Hope, creativity, light, vision, polarities, the separation of two different elements.
- ᛟ **Othala** (“oath-awe-law”)
 - Meaning:** Homeland
 - Magical Themes:** Home, family, protection, stability, prosperity, history, tradition.

SONG AND SPINDLE

The skills of Performance and Crafts are an important part of Norse magical styles. As an optional rule, the Storyteller may allow every two successes on a Charisma + Performance (Singing) roll, at difficulty 7, to add one automatic success to a rune-singer's efforts to cast *galdr* rotes.

Also, a similar rule may be applied to *spá-kona* when using their weaving (Dexterity + Crafts) as a focus for their magic.

SMITHCRAFT

The smith has always held an important place in pre-industrial societies, and the Norse are no different. A master smith can craft all manner of useful tools. In addition, a Norse smith who understands the powers of the runes can carve them into his work. In this way, powerful spells and other magics can be bound into swords and other weapons, as well as into amulets, jewelry, ships and countless other material goods.

To even attempt smithcraft magic, one must have access to a forge, as well as hammers, tongs, an anvil and other tools of the trade. In addition, the best items require the best materials. This means high quality iron, wood, leather, gold and other goods. Once an object has been forged (or carved, for smithcraft magic can be used in carpentry and other crafts as well), runes taken from the Elder Futhark are carved into the



The following is a selection of Norse magical effects that might be found among modern practitioners of any of the arts discussed in this chapter.

GALDR ROTES

Sæmund's *Edda* features Odin giving his account of how he discovered the runes and his description of the 18 Songs of Power which form the basis of *Galdr* magic. Each of these rotes requires that the mage sing the rune in order to accomplish the magical Effect. In the paradigm of the rune mage, each of these rotes works for the simple reason that Odin says they do. To one who believes in the power of the runes, no other explanation is necessary.

All of the quotes featured below are taken from the Olive Bray translation of Sæmund's *Edda*.

Please note that there is little to no evidence that the rune songs spoken of in Sæmund's *Edda* correspond with the runes of the Elder Futhark. The use of Elder Futhark sounds and symbols in the following rotes are included for roleplaying purposes, so that players will be able to actually sing the runes if they desire to do so.

DAEDALIAN VIKINGS

Although not a part of Norse myth, there is another option for Norse willworkers in *Mage*. Players familiar with *Mage: The Sorcerer's Crusade* will be aware of Enlightened Artisanry, the preindustrial precursor of the modern Enlightened Science used by the Technocracy, the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts. Enlightened Artisans, sometimes referred to as Artificers, use secret lore in the fields of chemistry, engineering and mathematics to create objects that, while keeping with the scientific principles of the time period, are able to mimic the abilities of objects decades — if not centuries — into the future. Boats that do not leak and blades that do not dull are only the most basic of items Artificers can craft. Such willworkers will be present in medieval Norse society, and it is possible that some of their arts have even been preserved into the modern day.

For more information on Enlightened Artisanry, see *The Artisans Handbook* for *Mage: The Sorcerer's Crusade*.

finished product. Often these runes are placed in hidden or unobvious locations so that the magic properties of the item will remain a secret from all save its crafter and its welder.

ROTES

DARK AGES RUNESINGERS

The magical effects listed here may also be found among Nordic willworkers in the medieval period, as well as among the Valdaermen Fellowship covered in *Dark Ages: Mage*. Valdaermen means for casting these rotes are listed separately below, for those players using *Dark Ages: Mage*.

Those who do not play *Dark Ages: Mage* may freely ignore these extra tidbits of magical lore.

HELP RUNE

[• MIND, • PRIME,
OPTIONAL •• OR •••• PRIME]

*Those songs I know, which nor sons of men
nor queen in a king's court knows;
the first is Help which will bring thee help
in all woes and in sorrow and strife.*

With this rune, the user may fortify his soul in times of hardship.

System: The character sings the runes of *Naudhiz* (for self-reliance) and *Sowilo* (for hope and salvation). For each success on his magic role, the character gains one temporary Willpower point for the remainder of the scene. At the end

of the scene, the additional Willpower fades and the character's temporary Willpower is at two points lower than when he began. At higher levels of power, the character may add the rune of *Thurisaz* (for defense and primal force) in order to arm himself (as the **Holy Stroke** effect on page 183 of *Mage*) or even channel raw destructive energy at his foes.

Valdaermen: Forlog ••, Fara ••• (for temporary Willpower points), optional Hjaldar ••• (destructive energy).

HEALER RUNE

[• OR •• OR •••• LIFE, OR ••• OR •••• MIND]

*A second I know, which the son of men
must sing, who would heal the sick.*

At its most basic, this rune song simply increases the user's effectiveness as a healer by enabling him to better diagnose injury and illness and to eliminate infections. More powerful runesingers are able to use this song to directly re-knit damaged bones and flesh. This rune song may be used to provide emotional and psychological healing as well.

System: The character sings the runes of *Wunjo* (for well-being) and *Laguz* (for primal life energy) while performing the actions of a mundane healer (Perception + Medicine for diagnosis; Intelligence + Medicine for treatment). Acts of diagnosis and sanitation (• and •• Life) are coincidental, while direct healing (•••• Life) is vulgar.

To perform psychological healing (••• Mind), the rune-singer must sing the runes of *Gebo* (for the subconscious mind) and *Wunjo* (for well-being) as he meditates over the sleeping target of the spell. The mage then projects his own mind into the subject's dreams in order to better understand and to deal with the other person's inner demons (roll Perception + Enigmas for diagnosis, Intelligence + Enigmas to attempt to influence the sleeping subject's dreams). At higher levels of power (•••• Mind), the runesinger may alter, erase or deal with memories or mental conditionings that negatively influences the subject's conscious actions.

Valdaermen: Forlog •••• (physical healing), or Fara ••••, Galdrar • (for mental healing).

SWORDBREAKER RUNE

[•• FORCES, OR •• FORCES AND •• MATTER]

*A third I know: if sore need should come
of a spell to stay my foes;
when I sing that song, which shall blunt their swords,
nor their weapons nor staves can wound.*

With this rune, the user may render an opponent's weapons useless or even disarm him all together.

System: The character sings the runes of *Uruz* (for defense) and *Kenaz* (to attune to the forged weapons), calling upon its power to defend him from harm. The most basic form of this rune song creates a field around the character, deflecting the kinetic energy of attacking weapons. More powerful runesingers may add the *Thurisaz* rune to the song, causing an opponent's weapons to

transform to much more brittle materials which then shatter at the sound of the caster's voice. Both uses of this rune are vulgar.

Valdaermen: Hjaldar •••.

CHAINBREAKER RUNE

[•• ENTROPY, • MATTER, OR •• ENTROPY,
•• MATTER, OR ••• ENTROPY, ••• MATTER]

*A fourth I know: if men make fast
in chains the joints of my limbs,
when I sing that song which shall set me free,
spring the fetters from hands and feet.*

With this rune, the user may free himself from any physical forms of bondage.

System: The character sings the runes of *Perthro* (for luck) and *Naudhiz* (for problem solving). For a beginning runesinger, this enables him to locate weaknesses within his bonds and more easily free himself (roll Perception + Enigmas, difficulty 7, and add the number of successes to the character's roll to escape his bonds). As the character progresses in mystical skill, he will be able to unlock and ultimately destroy bonds with his voice. The first level of this rote is coincidental. The second level is vulgar unless the character is able to successfully bluff witnesses into believing he has performed a mundane act of escape artistry. The final level is always vulgar.

Valdaermen: Fara •• (to slip from physical bonds), Fara ••• (to unlock bonds), or Hjaldar ••• (to destroy bonds).

SPEAR CATCHER RUNE

[• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• TIME,
OPTIONAL ••• FORCES]

*A fifth I know: when I see, by foes shot,
speeding a shaft through the host,
flies it never so strongly I still can stay it,
if I get but a glimpse of its flight.*

With this rune, the user may catch arrows, knives, spears and even bullets.

System: The character sings the runes of *Kenaz* (for craftwork to attune to the weapons and for applied energy) and *Eihwaz* (for protection). Time seems to slow as the runesinger becomes acutely aware of the position of each projectile coming towards him. For each success on his *Arete* roll, the character is able to safely pluck one projectile from the air around him. In order to safely pluck bullets from the air, the character must employ Forces magic to dissipate the heat generated by the bullets' kinetic energy, or else use gloves capable of resisting such heat.

Valdaermen: Fara •••, Hjaldar •.

COUNTERSPELL RUNE [SPECIAL]

*A sixth I know: when some thane would harm me
in runes on a moist tree's root,
on his head alone shall light the ills
of the curse that he called upon mine.*

With this rune, the user may reflect harmful magical effects back against their caster.

System: The character sings the runes of *Raidho* (for justice) and *Othalo* (for protection) to serve as a means of performing Countermagic (see page 154 of *Mage*).

Valdaermen: Galdrar ••••.

FIRE RUNE

[••• FORCES OR •••• MATTER]

*A seventh I know: if I see a hall
high o'er the bench-mates blazing,
flame it ne'er so fiercely I still can save it,
I know how to sing that song.*

With this rune, the user may douse fires which threaten homes and other buildings.

System: The character sings the runes of *Isa* (for cold) and *Othala* (for home), and is able to suck the energy out of any fire that threatens a house, building or other dwelling. At more powerful levels, the character may temporarily render the materials of the dwelling unable to burn at all. Both uses of this rune song are vulgar.

Valdaermen: Forlog •••

PEACE RUNE

[•• OR •••• MIND, OR ••••• ENTROPY]

*An eighth I know: which all can sing
for their weal if they learn it well;
where hate shall wax 'mid the warrior sons,
I can calm it soon with that song.*

With this rune, the user may calm hearts and minds, allowing cooler heads to prevail in delicate and critical situations.

System: The character sings the runes of *Wunjo* (for harmony and friendship) and *Tiwaz* (for order and good judgment). At basic levels, this rune song projects a sense of calm and peacefulness to those who hear it. More powerful runesingers may outright force listeners to cease conflicts, or even temporarily eliminate the entire concept of conflict from the minds of listeners.

Valdaermen: Forlog •• (calming), optional Hjaldar •• (to also eliminate conflict from minds).

STORM RUNE [••• ENTROPY, ••• FORCES]

*A ninth I know: when need befalls me
to save my vessel afloat,
I hush the wind on the stormy wave,
and soothe all the sea to rest.*

With this rune, the user may calm the storms and waves which threaten any nautical vessel.

System: The character sings the runes of *Isa* (for control) and *Ingwaz* (for stability and rest), and for the remainder of the scene, the excess kinetic energy is removed from the air and water, and changes in the local weather patterns are temporarily eliminated. Each success on the character's Arete roll extends the radius of the effect by 50 feet.

Valdaermen: Fara ••, Forlog •

WARD RUNE

[••• CORRESPONDENCE, ••• MIND,
OPTIONAL •• SPIRIT]

*A tenth I know: when at night the witches
ride and sport in the air,
such spells I weave that they wander home
out of skins and wits bewildered.*

With this rune, the user may prevent those who seek to harm him from finding their way to his location.

System: The character sings the runes of *Hagalaz* (for chaos) and *Othala* (for protection and home). A barrier is created around the character's location (for each success on the character's Arete roll, extend the radius of the ward by 10 feet) that confuses and disorients anyone who comes across it. Victims quickly lose their sense of direction, becoming lost for the remainder of the scene. With the addition of Spirit magic, this barrier becomes effective against ghosts and other spirits as well.

Valdaermen: Fara ••, optional Galdrar ••• (against spirits).

BATTLE RUNE

[••• CORRESPONDENCE, •••• LIFE, ••• MIND]

*An eleventh I know: if haply I lead
my old comrades out to war,
I sing 'neath the shields, and they fare forth mightily
safe into battle,
safe out of battle,
and safe return from the strife.*

With this rune, the user may turn a number of his comrades into a powerful fighting force.

System: The character sings the runes of *Ehwas* (for teamwork) and *Laguz* (for vitality and virtue). For each success on his Arete roll, the runesinger may enchant one person other than himself for an entire scene. The magic of the rune song is spread throughout the group, bringing each member to the peak of physical health. All Bashing Damage is healed at the end of each turn, and all wound penalties for Lethal Damage are halved for the entire scene. In addition, all members of the group are inspired by the runesinger's confidence, becoming highly motivated and in turn, feed off of each other's confidence. Everyone affected by the rote has their temporary Willpower fully replenished until the end of the scene, at which time they return to one lower than their previous level.

Valdaermen: Forlog ••••, Hjaldar •••.

GHOST RUNE

[• ENTROPY, •• SPIRIT, OPTIONAL
•• CORRESPONDENCE AND/OR •• TIME]

*A twelfth I know: if I see in a tree
a corpse from a halter hanging,
such spells I write, and paint in runes,
that the being descends and speaks.*

With this rune, the user may summon forth the spirit of a *völva* (a women gifted in the arts of prophecy) and question her about the threads of wyrd. This way, the summoner can gain knowledge of the past, present or future.

System: This works just as the **Call Spirit** effect on page 187 of *Mage*, with a few minor differences. The character must paint the runes of *Perthro* (for divination), *Eihwas* (for enlightenment and bridging the worlds of life and death) and *Elhaz* (for calling upon spirits) upon the corpse, the skull or the grave marker of the spirit he wishes to call upon and then sings the same set of runes. By focusing on the forces of wyrd (using Entropy), the caster summons forth a female ghost capable of reading the threads of fate. For players familiar with **Wraith: the Oblivion**, this means summoning a ghost skilled in the art of Fatalism. Otherwise, the ghost serves as a vehicle for the caster's own Correspondence and/or Time magic. The use of Time enables the character to view the past and futures, as the **Divination** effect on page 192 of *Mage*. Correspondence enables the character to view events in the present, as the **Correspondence Sensing** effect on page 159 of *Mage*.

Valdaermen: Galdrar •• (scrying in the present) or ••• (scrying into past or future).

BAPTISM RUNE [•••• ENTRØPY]

*A thirteenth I know: if the new-born son
of a warrior I sprinkle with water,
that youth will not fail when he fares to war,*

never slain show he bow before sword.

With this rune, the user may bless a new-born child, ensuring that he will never die as a result of combat.

System: The character sings the runes of *Berkano* (for birth rites), *Perthro* (for luck), *Othala* (for protection), and *Sowilo* (for guidance and salvation) while tracing these same runes on the baby's forehead with pure water. By gently manipulating the child's wyrd, it ensures that he will never in his life fall in battle (or is at least unlikely to do so). However, this blessing does nothing to protect the child from illness, poisoning, drowning or any other form of death, nor does it guarantee any success in war.

Valdaermen: Forlog •••••, Hjaldar •.

LØRE RUNE

[• CORRESPONDENCE, • LIFE, • MATTER,
• MIND, • PRIMIE, • SPIRIT]

*A fourteenth I know: if I needs must number
the Powers to the people of men,
I know all the nature of gods and of elves
which none can know untaught.*

With this rune, the user may identify any non-human supernatural being within his sight.

System: The character sings the runes of *Eihwas* (for enlightenment) and *Mannaz* (for understanding the differences between the mundane and the supernatural). With a single success, the character is able to see all spirits within his line of sight, as well as



recognize any non-human supernatural being. This includes the undead, werebeasts, changelings, and demons. With two successes, the character is able to differentiate between broad types (telling the difference between drones and abstracts, or between a vampire and a werewolf, for example). With three successes, he is able to differentiate between categories within each types (different breeds of changeling or bloodlines of vampires). With four successes, the character has a basic understanding of each supernatural creature's general powers (which Charms a spirit might possess, or a type of changeling's ability to transform into an animal). With five successes, the character understands what each creature is capable of (a vampire's power to work black magic and craft illusions).

For players familiar with White Wolf's other World of Darkness game lines, this does not grant the character any knowledge of those game lines' character types or their ways. The mage will understand related bloodlines rather than such things as Clans or Tribes, and only a general understanding of what a power is able to accomplish rather than specific Disciplines or Arts.

Valdaermen: Galdrar • (identify a supernatural being) or •• (know the nature of a power used).

CHIMINAGE RUNE

[••• ⊕R •••• PRIMIE, •• SPIRIT]

*A fifteenth I know, which Folk-stirrer sang,
the dwarf, at the gates of Dawn;
he sang strength to the gods, and skill to the elves,
and wisdom to Odin who utters.*

With this rune, the user may offer power to spirits in exchange for information and other items of barter.

System: The character sings the runes of *Elhaz* (to communicate with spirits), *Manaz* (to forge a link between himself and the spirit) and *Ansuz* (for power and inspiration). The rote transfers Quintessence from the runesinger's Quintessence pool (or if the need is great enough, from his own Pattern) into the spirit's Power reserves. Each point of Quintessence is transformed into a number of Power points equal to the number of successes on the character's magic roll. More powerful runesingers are able to add the rune of *Ingwaz* (for the power of the earth) to the song, drawing Quintessence directly from the earth itself rather than from his own reserves.

This rote only enables the mage to offer Chiminage to the spirit. Negotiating the deal depends entirely upon the character's natural abilities.

Valdaermen: Galdrar •••• (channel own Quintessence to another) or ••••• (channel from elsewhere).

MIND RUNE [•••• MIND]

*A sixteenth I know: when all sweetness and love
I would win from some artful wench,
her heart I turn, and the whole mind change
of that fair-armed lady I love.*

With this rune, the user may take control of another person's mind and manipulate it toward his own ends.

System: The character sings the runes of *Fehu* (for social advancement) and *Isa* (for control), and with the power of his voice seizes control over the conscious mind of another individual. Further singing will allow the character to manipulate the target's memories, in effect brainwashing her. This works just as the Possession and Manipulate Memories effects on page 178 of *Mage*.

Valdaermen: Fara •••• (to control actions), optional Galdrar •••• (to read deep thoughts).

CHARM RUNE [•• MIND]

*A seventeenth I know: so that e'en the shy maiden
is slow to shun my love.*

With this rune, the user may surround himself with an aura of charm and friendliness.

System: The character sings the runes of *Ansuz* (for social interaction) and *Wunjo* (for harmony). For the remainder of the scene, he radiates feelings of trust, friendliness and charm. While under the effect of this rune song, the character gains a number of additional dice equal to his *Arete* rating in all Social rolls that are non-confrontational in nature (including fast-talking, seduction, fitting in and performing for a crowd).

Valdaermen: Forlog ••.

SECRET RUNE [••••• ENTRÓPY]

*An eighteenth I know: which I ne'er shall tell
to maiden or wife of man
save alone to my sister, or haply to her
who folds me fast in her arms;
most safe are secrets known to but one —
the songs are sung to an end.*

With this rune, the user may ensure that information he shares with someone he trusts will be kept secret.

System: The character must be alone with a second individual whom he trusts implicitly, either a family member, a blood-brother or a lover. The character speaks the information to be kept secret, and as the secret keeper swears to keep the character's trust, the character sings the runes of *Ehwaz* (for loyalty), *Gebo* (for union), *Pethro* (for calling upon the wyrd) and *Tiwaz* (for oathmaking). If the secret keeper should ever break the oath and tell anyone else the secret, she will develop a single Flaw, the magnitude of which is decided by the number of successes the caster gains while performing the rune song. Each two successes raises the Flaw level by one. Suitable Flaws include (but are not limited to) the following.

Level One: Nightmares, Speech Impediment, Echoes.

Level Two: Amnesia, Deranged, Phobia, Echoes.

Level Three: Degeneration, Permanent Wound, Echoes.

Level Four: Deaf, Mute, Echoes.

Level Five: Mayfly Curse, Dark Fate, Echoes.

Level Six and Above: Degeneration, Paraplegic, Mayfly Curse.

Valdaermen: Forlog •••• (curse the oathbreaker), Galdrar ••• (bind the secret).

SPÁ-KONA ROTES

The magic of the *spá-kona* is born from the woman's role as wife and mother. Her magic draws power from the arts of spinning and weaving, which resonate with the Norns and the threads of fate, as well as healing and personal intuition. They are the traditional mystical arts of the wise woman. Only women may learn these rotes, and they are traditionally passed down from mother to daughter (although elder sisters, aunts, grandmothers and godmothers all make suitable mentors if necessary).

LAYING ON OF HANDS

[• ENTRØPY, • LIFE, •• TIME]

Before a battle, a Norse woman would touch her son all over his body, and through her understanding of *ørlög* would know in advance which wounds he would receive. Although used primarily upon one's blood relatives, it will also work on others. This advance knowledge makes it possible to prepare necessary healing materials (ancient or modern) in advance.

System: The user must touch the subject over the majority of his body while concentrating upon her natural understanding of *ørlög*. Entropy and Life enable her to sense where the threads of fate touch the person's body, while Time gives a clearer picture of future events which center upon those threads. The greater the number of successes, the greater the details she knows about the future injuries.

While this rote can be used to try and prevent foretold wounds from occurring (through the use of armor, protective magics or other means), one should be wary when attempting such tactics. Not even the gods can escape their fated deaths, and the Norns will sometimes frown on those who dare try (i.e., Paradox).

Valdaermen: Galdrar •, Hjaldar •.

GØRNINGSTAKKR

[•• ENTRØPY, •• LIFE, •• MATTER,
•• PRIMIE, OR •••• MATTER, •• PRIMIE,
OR ••• LIFE, •• MATTER, •• PRIMIE]

One of the most famous creations of the *spá-kona*'s art is the *gørnингstakkr*, or wound-proof shirt. By working her magic through her spindle and loom, the *spá-kona* weaves spells of protection into the very fabric of a shirt meant for her brother, husband or son.

System: Creating the *gørnингstakkr* is always an extended ritual. The *spá-kona* must speak spells of healing and protection while spinning the thread and weaving the cloth to be used in the shirt. The shirt is then embroidered with runes of healing and protection (*Wunjo*, *Sowilo* and *Othala* are the most common, as well as *Kenaz* to represent the craftwork involved). The most basic version of the wound-proof shirt weaves Entropy magic into the shirt to bring luck, and Life magic to heal wounds that are received (the nature of these shirts allow self-healing magic to be applied to the wearer rather than the user, similarly to the way modern Technocracy medical patches can be used even by those not trained in the arts of Enlightened Medicine). The amount of damage

the shirt can heal is dependant upon the number of successes the *spá-kona* garners while weaving the shirt.

More skilled *spá-kona* are able to weave shirts that are literally proof against the effects of blades, spears and arrows. Such shirts count as Class 4 Armor (providing four additional soak dice), but do not hinder mobility. In addition, the shirt converts lethal attacks from stabbing or cutting weapons into bashing damage, as the blades are unable to penetrate the cloth.

The art of weaving may also be used to harm as well as heal. If the *spá-kona* speaks spells of death and vengeance while spinning and weaving, and soaks the threads in poison, she may create a cursed shirt that will kill the wearer. The shirt is embroidered with baleful and destructive runes (*Thurisaz*, *Hagalaz*, and *Isa*, as well as *Tiwaz* if the vengeance is just). The wearer of the shirt is affected as if subject to the Rip the Man-Body effect (page 171 of *Mage*).

Valdaermen: Hjaldar ••• (for an armored shirt), or Hjaldar •••, Galdrar • (for a cursed shirt).

WYRD VISIONS

[•• CORRESPONDANCE, • ENTRØPY, •• TIME]

At the heart of the *spá-kona*'s craft is the art of knowing. The *spá-kona* is intrinsically tuned to the threads of fate and can understand the wyrd of many things if needed. By attuning herself to the ways of wyrd, a *spá-kona* may divine understanding of the past, present or future simply through personal intuition.

System: The mage must meditate upon the flow of wyrd. Most *spá-kona* do this while spinning thread. In addition to the sympathetic link between their thread and the threads of fate, the spinning of a multi-faceted spindle whorl creates a strobe of flashing light that aids in meditation (effectively a form of self-hypnosis). By doing this, the mage is able to gain knowledge of people, places or events in the past or present that will influence present and future events. Entropy magic is used to find those things on which destiny hinges. Correspondence magic is used to skry the present. Time magic is used to divine the past and hint at possible futures.

Valdaermen: Forlog •, Galdrar ••.

SEIÐR ROTES

The arts of seiðr are entirely shamanic in nature. The seiðr worker calls upon the powers of spirits and ghosts to divine prophecy, cloud the minds of men, and revenge herself upon her enemies. Seiðr working is considered a woman's art. Many *spá-kona* are also skilled at seiðr (although not all seiðr workers will be *spá-kona*). Men who wish to learn such magics (including the rotes below) must seek out a seiðr worker and learn from her. However, by doing so, the man is seen as having taken on womanly attributes. Although modern mages are unlikely to care, this may influence a character's social interactions in any chronicle set during the medieval period. For more on the subject of shamanism and gender transgression, see *Tradition Book: Dreamspeakers*.

Although medieval-era seiðr workers were Norse, they are not considered Valdaermen in *Dark Ages: Mage*; they are

Spirit-Talkers. Methods for casting these rotes using Spirit-Talker Pillars are listed below, for players of **Dark Ages: Mage**.

SUMMITON VÖLVA

[• ENTRÖPY, •• SPIRIT, OPTIONAL
•• CORRESPONDENCE AND/OR •• TIME]

One of the most basic practices of the seiðr worker is to summon and question the spirits of the dead. She will summon the ghost of a woman (usually a *spá-kona*) gifted in the arts of prophecy and question her about the workings of wyrd.

System: This rote works identically to the Ghost Rune rote above. However, instead of singing runes, the seiðr worker sits on her hen-feather cushion and rhythmically taps her staff while chanting the *vardþokur*. Often, the mage will be assisted by one or more unAwakened female assistants who chant the *vardþokur* with her.

Spirit-Talkers: Wise One ••.

GOING UNDER THE CLOAK

[•• LIFE, ••• MIND]

By wrapping herself in her cloak and entering a trance, the seiðr worker is able to suspend herself between the worlds of life and death, projecting her soul into the lands of the dead.

System: The mage places her cat-skin hood over her head like a shroud and covers herself entirely within her blue cloak, symbolically becoming one of the dead. She begins to chant the *gand*, slowing her body's natural functions to a crawl until her soul comes forth from her mouth and enters the Underworld. Traditionally, this will be performed while sitting atop a barrow or grave, where the boundaries between life and death are thinner. The mage astrally projects herself into the Shadowlands, where she may move about as if she were a ghost. As with all uses of astral projection, this ability is unaffected by the Avatar Storm.

At present, travel in the Shadowlands is a dangerous undertaking. Storms rage among the lands of the dead, often with a force comparable to hurricanes. These storms tend to spew forth shrapnel, caustic chemicals and even worse. Enter at your own risk.

Spirit-Talkers: Trickster ••, Wise One •••.

SJÓNHVERFING ("DECEIVING OF THE SIGHT")

[•• OR ••• MIND, OR •••• ENTRÖPY,
OR •• FORCES]

One of the hallmarks of the seiðr art in the sagas is the power to cloud the minds of men. With her magic, the seiðr worker is able to engulf others in illusion, forgetfulness, fear or even real fog.

System: The art of *sjónhverfing* draws upon the "evil eye." By chanting the *gand*, the seiðr worker weaves a spell of illusion over all those within eyesight. At the most basic level, the mage may strike all of those in her presence with feelings of fear and dread. Each success from the spell adds one automatic success to any Intimidation rolls. At more powerful levels of skill, she may place illusions within men's minds, causing them to perceive people or objects as something else, or even make people believe that she has summoned storms

or even turned the world upside down (completely distorting the victim's ability to tell up from down, or even to be able to properly process the sensory information his brain takes in). In addition, some seiðr workers also know how to physically blind men's sight by summoning thick fog and mist.

This magic is instantly dispelled if the mage is blindfolded.

Spirit-Talkers: Chieftain ••• (strike fear in others), or Chieftain •••• and Trickster •• (to force others to believe illusions), or Trickster •••, Wise One •• (to summon mist).

HULIASHIÁLITR ("HELIET OF HIDING")

[•• OR ••• PRIME, WITH •• FORCES,
OR •••• MIND, OR ••••• ENTRÖPY,]

In addition to the powers of illusion, the seiðr worker also knows the arts of invisibility. Although it is easiest for the mage to make herself invisible (by pulling her cat-skin hood over her head), she may also use several methods to render another person invisible as well.

System: To make herself invisible, the seiðr worker uses her own ritual cat-skin hood, enchanted with the powers of her magic. The magic takes effect instantly as the hood is pulled down. At basic levels, the seiðr worker bends light around herself (and can only see in the IR and UV spectrums). As her power grows, she becomes able to force others to ignore her presence or be unable to even recognize the very concept of her presence.

The mage can make others invisible as well, either by placing her hands on the person's head and chanting, or through the application of herbal powders.

Spirit-Talkers: Trickster ••• (personal invisibility) or •••• (to make others invisible).

GAND-REIÐ ("CHANT RIDING") [•••• MIND]

With the power of the *gand* chant, the seiðr worker is able to project her soul out into the world, entering the dreams of sleeping men, possessing the bodies of animals or even taking the form of a bodiless shade. With the power of the *gand-reið*, she is able to spy upon others, torment enemies with night terrors or even cause animals to attack.

System: The mage sits upon her hen-feather cushion, wrapped in her blue cloak while chanting the *gand*. Her soul then exits her body, traveling out towards her intended target. As an astral spirit, the seiðr worker may enter the minds of those who are asleep, or she may possess the body of an animal. In the sagas, seiðr workers are shown taking the forms of cats, wolves, ravens, horses, walrus and other animals.

Spirit-Talkers: Chieftain ••, Trickster ••, Wise One •••.

WEATHER WORKING [•••• FORCES]

By calling upon the spirits of storm and sea, the seiðr worker can unleash and disperse powerful storm winds, summon or banish blizzards, and enrage or calm the ocean waves.

System: The mage sits atop her seið-hjallr, and chants the *vardþokur* to summon the powers of the Vanir. With the blessings of the ancient gods of earth, sea and sky, she is able

to alter the weather in a manner of her choosing. This rote works as the **Storm Watch** effect on page 167 of **Mage**.

Spirit-Talkers: Chieftain •••••.

OTHER MAGICS

Finally, there are a handful of magics which do not fit among the previous mystical styles.

WEARING THE BEAR SHIRT [••• LIFE, • MIND, •••• SPIRIT]

Perhaps the most famous signature magic of the Norse, the wearing of the bear shirt (also known as berserking) enables the user to become a terror of the battle field. By channeling the spirit of the bear, the warrior is able to call upon the creature's strength and stamina, as well as its ferocity. Such magic may be among the most universal, as variations of the berserker warrior are found in the cultures of India, Africa and North America as well as among the ancient Germanic and Celtic peoples.

System: To perform the ritual, the user must have a shirt made of bear skin, preferably from a bear he has hunted and killed himself. Offerings must be made to appease the bear's spirit so that it will agree to lend the berserker its power. By drawing upon the natural connection between the bear-shirt and the bear's spirit, the mage is able to channel the spirit into himself. The bear's power then serves to increase the mage's physical strength and endurance, as well as help steel his mind against the pain of wounds, injury and exhaustion.

For each success on the character's magic roll, he may add one dot to his Strength or Stamina attributes, or ignore one level worth of wound penalties for the remainder of the scene. The character may raise his Attributes to Legendary level, but doing so gives him one level of Permanent Paradox for each dot above 5 for the remainder of the scene. If the character botches his roll, the character does not gain any of the bear's power but instead enters a berserk frenzy for the scene. While in the frenzy, he will attack anyone, friend or foe, within sight.

Valdaermen: A different version of this effect is given in **Dark Ages: Mage** under the description of Hjaldar •••• and •••••. (Dark Medieval era mages need not worry about Paradox, although Backlash is a risk.)

ARTS OF WEYLAND: CRAFTING WONDERS

The magic of smithcraft is largely the art of crafting charms and talismans. Rules for creating such objects can be found in the **Mage Storytellers Companion**.

For Norse smithcrafters, these items must be forged (or sewn, in the case of *spá-kona* weaving magic) using the mage's Crafts skill. Through the use of Matter and Prime magic, the character shapes the item while infusing it with mystical power. In order to enchant the item, the crafter must carve (or embroider) the appropriate runes into the object. A drinking horn that neutralizes poison, for example, may have the runes of Gebo (for hospitality), *Laguz* (for vitality) and *Othala* (for protection).

In addition, all mystical crafts should include the rune of *Kenaz*, symbolizing the art of the smith and the applied magical energy that has gone into making the item.

WISE WOMEN AND LEARNED MEN: CHARACTERS



Although much of the culture that spawned it is long gone, Norse magic continues to exist, and there are those who still practice the old ways. The following information is provided for those who wish to create such characters.

AVATARS

There are a wide variety of spirits, gods and other creatures for a Norse mage's Avatar to take.

• **Animals:** Many of the Norse gods had animals that were sacred to them. The boar was sacred to Freyr, and the Nidavellim gifted him with a golden boar named *Gullinbursti* ("golden bristles"), which could outrun any horse. Both cats and falcons were sacred to the goddess Freyja, and both frequently appear as Avatars to seiðr workers. Thor had a pair of goats. Odin kept a pair of wolves (Freki and Geri) as his hunting hounds, as well as a pair of ravens, Hugin and Munin (Thought and Memory), who served as his spies. Any of the four creatures, or more

mundane wolves and ravens, might serve as an Avatar to a rune mage. Other possibilities include deer (representing the four deer who dwell among the branches of *Yggdrasill*), squirrels (including Ratatosk himself) and bears.

• **Spirits:** Several of the spirits found in Norse myth might serve as a character's Avatar. One of the Nidavellim would be a suitable Avatar for a smithcrafter. Other possibilities include one of the Alfar, the Valkyries (especially common among Nordic Euthanatoi), and house spirits (most suitable for *spá-kona*). The spirits of the dead may also serve as Avatars. A *spá-kona* might have the spirit of her grandmother as her Avatar, while a smith mage might have the ghost of a long dead practitioner of his craft.

• **Gods:** Any one of the Norse gods might act as a character's (powerful) Avatar. Odin is especially suitable for rune mages, while Frigg and Freyja might be the Avatar for *spá-kona* and seiðr workers, respectively. Weyland, Loki, Thor, Tyr or any other god that fits the character's concept and personality might also be suitable.

AVATARS OF THE DAMNED

The Norse traditions provide their fair share of Nephantic willworkers as well. Curiously enough, Norse Nephandi only possess four different Avatars, with all members of each Essence sharing the same Avatar. Those with Destructive Essences have as their Avatar Surt, the lord of the fire giants who will one day engulf all of creation in fire. Nephandi with Frozen Essences are guided by Nidhogg, the ebon serpent who gnaws upon the roots of Yggdrassil in the hopes of ending all that which exists. Chaotic Nephandi gain wisdom from the whispered words of Loki Fire-Hair, the chaos-bringer. And those who suffer with Tormented Essences find their Avatar to be Jormungandr, the World Serpent, whose poison fangs bite into his own tail, trapping him in an endless cycle of pain.

SEEKINGS

Like all mages, those who follow the ways of the Norse must undergo Seekings in order to increase their understanding of magic. For *vitki* (rune wizards), the preferred method is to imitate Odin's vigil upon the World Ash. The mage will seek out a suitably isolated clearing with an ash tree. There, he will ritually wound himself with a spear, dedicating himself as a sacrifice to the All-High, and then hang himself from the branches of the tree for nine days and nine nights. Most mages hang themselves by the neck, but others are known to hang themselves by the feet, symbolically becoming the Hanged Man from the Major Arcana of the Tarot. By hanging from the tree, the mage symbolically suspends himself between life and death. Seiðr workers undergo shamanic rituals as part of their seekings. This includes going under the cloak and becoming as one dead. While in this shamanistic trance, the seiðr worker's soul goes to the place between life and death, just as the *vitki* does during his seeking.

In contrast, *spá-kona* and smithcrafters lose themselves within their work. The *spá-kona* meditates while spinning, slowly losing herself in the strobe effect of the faceted spindle whorl. Her mind travels into the threads, and through them, into the threads of fate. The smith-mage loses himself in his craftwork. His pounding of the hammer or movement of tools becomes a repetitive rhythm as he meditates upon his craft, gaining wisdom in the act of creation itself.

CHARACTER GUIDELINES

The following is provided to give players a better understanding of the skills and other traits a mage who follows one of the Nordic magical styles might possess.

THE PRACTICAL VITKAR (RUNEWIAGE)

The *vitkar* (plural *vitki*) is a wizard who has learned and studied the secrets of the runes and their songs. Such wizards are always male (women learn and use the runes in an entirely different fashion).

• **Abilities:** The cornerstone of the *vitkar*'s art is the Performance skill, with a specialty in singing. A *vitkar* who

cannot sing the runes is not much of a *vitkar* at all. The Craft skill is also necessary for successfully writing and carving the runes onto materials such as wood and stone. Additional skills such as Academics (Norse history and culture), Cosmology (Yggdrasill), and Occult (Runes) are not necessary to actually cast magic, but will be vital in actually understanding the culture from which the mage draws his paradigm and mystical knowledge. Also, one who follows the path of Odin is expected to be clever. Dullards have no business learning the runes. Skills such as Enigmas, Expression (poetry) and Subterfuge will be useful.

• **Backgrounds:** Arcane is a suitable background for one who follows in the path of a god of secrets and trickery. *Vitkar* are frequently marked by wyrd, and backgrounds such as Destiny and Blessing (from the Norse gods) are perfectly appropriate. A minor rating in the Legend background, representing the story of Odin and his vigil upon Yggdrasill, might also be fitting. Familiars are likely to be in the form of ravens or wolves (or perhaps even horses), although squirrels are also appropriate. Backgrounds such as Allies or Cult, representing followers of one of the modern variations on Norse beliefs, may also be suitable. A *vitkar* is highly unlikely to have the Library background, as the Norse did not write anything down until after the Christian conversions.

• **Magic:** The base of *vitkar* magic is the *galdr* rotes (see above). While no Sphere is more vital than the other for the *vitkar*'s craft, Entropy (to grasp and manipulate the threads of wyrd), Forces (to command the thunder and snow), Mind (to manipulate others) and Spirit (to summon and command the spirits of the dead) are often favorites for those who wish to emulate the power of the All-High. In addition, the *vitkar* may also decide to seek out the arts of seiðr.

THE PRACTICAL SPÁ-KONA

The *spá-kona*, or wise wife, draws power from the woman's role as wife and mother. Her magic is that of the healer, weaver and keeper of the keys of the household.

• **Abilities:** The cornerstones of the *spá-kona*'s art are Crafts (spinning & weaving), Medicine and Occult (Hearth Wisdom). The skills of Awareness and Enigmas will represent the mage's natural intuition and her ability to puzzle out the ways of wyrd. Meditation is also very useful for helping her to focus her mind and her magics while using her spindle whorl. Finally, skills such as Etiquette, Intimidation and Subterfuge are the hallmarks of every good wife and mother.

• **Backgrounds:** Destiny and Dream are both common backgrounds for *spá-kona*. Almost every *spá-kona* will have a sanctum where she does her spinning and weaving. Allies (in the form of family members), Blessing (from Frigg or from house spirits), Familiars (house pets), Influence (standing in the community) and Mentor (a mother, aunt or other older female relative) are also common and fitting.

• **Magic:** Entropy, with its power to touch the threads of fate, and Life, with its power to heal, are important Spheres for the *spá-kona* art. Matter and Prime, for their uses in

magical weaving, are also common. Spirit magic may also prove useful for dealing with household spirits.

THE PRACTICAL SEIÐR WORKER

Seiðr working is shamanistic in nature (its similarities to the arts practiced by Sami shaman are probably not coincidental). The seiðr worker works her craft through the summoning of spirits and her ability to bend the minds of others.

• **Abilities:** A cornerstone of seiðr working is the Meditation skill. By using it, the mage is able to send herself into the shamanistic trances much of her magic requires. Skills such as Awareness, Cosmology, Occult (Ghosts), Subterfuge and Intimidation are also both useful and common. Medicine is also used for the creation of various alchemical potions and other substances (including poisons).

• **Backgrounds:** Almost every seiðr worker possesses a sanctum where she keeps her seið-hjallr. Arcane, Destiny and Mentor (the seiðr worker's teacher) are also common. Many also possess the Cult background, representing a number of young women who assist the mage in several of her rituals. Familiars frequently take the form of cats, birds and other small animals. A few possess the Legend background, drawing strength from the stories of witch-women found in the Norse sagas.

• **Magic:** Spirit and Mind magic form the backbone of the seiðr worker's art, enabling her to summon and command spirits and ghosts, travel outside of her own body, and manipulate the minds of others. Entropy and Life magic are also used for both blessing and cursing. Forces magic allows the mage to command the forces of the weather.

THE PRACTICAL SMITHCRAFTER

Smithcrafting is a demanding magical form, as the practitioner must be as much artist as mage. The power of his magic is dependent upon his skill as a craftsman. His every work must be a masterpiece, carefully forged and crafted from the most prized of materials.

• **Abilities:** The Crafts skill is vital to the smithcrafter's magic. Weapon-smithing, woodworking and metalworking are only a few of the skills smith-mages must master. Science and Technology, as they apply to the smith-mage's art, will also be useful. Those who forge weapons should have some skill in Melee, so as to reflect familiarity with the tools created. Occult (Runes) is also needed to understand the secret of the runes the smith-mage carves into his work.

• **Backgrounds:** A sanctum is vital to the smith-mage's work. He must have a workshop in which to work his magic. Resources, gained from selling mundane (or even enchanted) works or from some other source, will also be useful to help the mage acquire the raw materials he needs. The Node background may also prove useful, providing the mage with the necessary Quintessence to create his Wonders. The tradition of apprenticeship among smiths means that Mentor is a common background as well. Legend is also possible, echoing the stories of Weyland (or perhaps other smith gods).

• **Magic:** Matter and Prime are the core of the Smithcrafter's magic art. Without those Spheres, he cannot work his craft. Forces proves useful for controlling the temperatures of the forge. Many smith-mages also learn the secrets of Entropy in order to control the destinies of the items they create. The Spirit Sphere may also be useful for crafting weapons with which to battle ghosts, as well as for the creation of Fetishes.

AMONG THE TRADITIONS

Just as the magic of the Norse survives, so to their modern practitioners find a home within the various Mystical Traditions.

CELESTIAL CHORUS

In the strictest sense, none of the Norse arts find a home among the Choristers. This is not to say, however, that their influence is not felt in certain quarters. The arts of the *spá-kona* do not depend upon any specific faith, instead drawing their power from the woman's traditional role in Scandinavian society. Because of this, a number of Christian *spá-kona* find their place among the Celestial Chorus. They continue to practice the arts of healing and weaving, whispering prayers over their spindles as they spin thread, and use their natural intuitive gifts to better understand the will of God as it shapes the destinies of men.

The Norse influence is also found upon a small sect (which some Choristers denounce as a cult) known as the Brotherhood of the Red Christ. When Christianity was first introduced to the Norse, they called the Son of God the White Christ. This was not a description of His skin or race, but an insult to His pacifistic, and therefore cowardly, ways (in contrast to the very warlike red god, Thor). The Brotherhood of the Red Christ has always held a rather contrary view. They view Christ's vigil upon the Cross as similar to Odin's vigil upon Yggdrasill. Just as the followers of Odin hang themselves in imitation of the All-High to gain mystical knowledge and insight, the members of the Brotherhood reenact the Crucifixion to test and purify their faith, and thereby gain a closer connection to God.

CULT OF ECSTASY

Those Ecstatics who follow the ways of the Norse tend to be seiðr workers. The effects of the shamanic trances allow the mage to reach beyond the material world and touch the divine realm (Lakashim), while the chants used in seiðr work act as mantras to focus the mage's power. Male seiðr workers suffer no social stigma among the Cult of Ecstasy, as the Tradition has rarely had any objections to gender transgression in the pursuit of mystical insight. Vitkar are also found among the Cult, with the gallows-tree vigil and the singing of the runes acting in a similar fashion.

The largest organized (if they could be called that) faction of Norse-influenced Ecstatics are known as the Hagalaz. Named after the rune that symbolized change and disruption, the Hagalaz were once a sect devoted to the idea that society must undergo constant upheaval in order to keep from stagnating and dying out. They opposed the encroachment of Christianity into Scandinavia because they believed — correctly — that with it

would come European ideas of government and social order. Eventually they gave up on driving Christianity from the region but continued to play devil's advocate to the dictates of the local clergy. When the Reformation began, the Hagalaz eagerly threw what support they could behind it, seeing the movement — again, correctly — as a means of disrupting the stagnation of the Catholic Church (and with it, the Cabal of Pure Thought). Unfortunately, during the Second World War, over 90% of the sect was killed in battles with Nazi mages, Enlightened Scientists and SS agents. What has grown out of the Hagalaz's own disruption would likely make the ancients weep.

The modern Hagalaz are primarily a collection of racist thugs and hate-filled misanthropes. The growing number of them who fall to Infernalism or even to the Nephandi has alarmed many among Scandinavia's mage population. Most modern seiðr workers and Vitki within the Cult avoid the sect, viewing their magical stylings as nothing but a shallow parody of the true Norse arts. Norse mages from other Traditions tend to share this view, and many believe the time has come for the Hagalaz to undergo another "disruption" — perhaps a permanent one.

DREAMSPEAKERS

The shamanic arts of seiðr find a welcome home within the Dreamspeakers. Many Dreamspeaker seiðr workers also practice the arts of the *spá-kona*, focusing on the wise woman's role as a cornerstone of any close-knit community. Norse Dreamspeakers are found throughout most of the Tradition's many factions. Baruti act as modern day Skalds, preserving and retelling the ancient sagas. Keepers of the Sacred Flame work to preserve the arts and beliefs of ancient Scandinavian and Germanic civilizations, including arts such as weaving, iron working and ship-building. Members of the Red Spear Society excel at adapting the seiðr arts to the fields of psychological and guerilla warfare. Spirit Smiths blend the arts of seiðr with those of smithcraft.

EUTHANATØI

One's Wyrd is inescapable. The fates of all men have been woven long ago by the Norns. But sometimes one will lose his way, falling further and further from his destiny. Yggdrassill's Keepers work to help those people find their fate, for good or ill. In the near-death experience that marks every Euthanatoic Awakening, the mage is thrust into the place between life and death, where insight and enlightenment might be found. They understand the nature of the gallows-tree vigil, as well as the act of going under the cloak. The members of Yggdrissal's Keepers practice all of the Norse mystical arts. Women learn the arts of the *spá-kona* and their natural understanding of wyrd and to heal those who aren't ready to die, as well as the ways of seiðr to call upon the powers of the dead and slay those who must die. Men follow the way of the Gallows God to learn the secrets of manipulating the threads of Wyrd, as well as the way of Weyland to create weapons and objects of great power and

destiny. With such arts, they help those who have lost their way to find their destiny, and force those who have avoided retribution to meet their deserved fate.

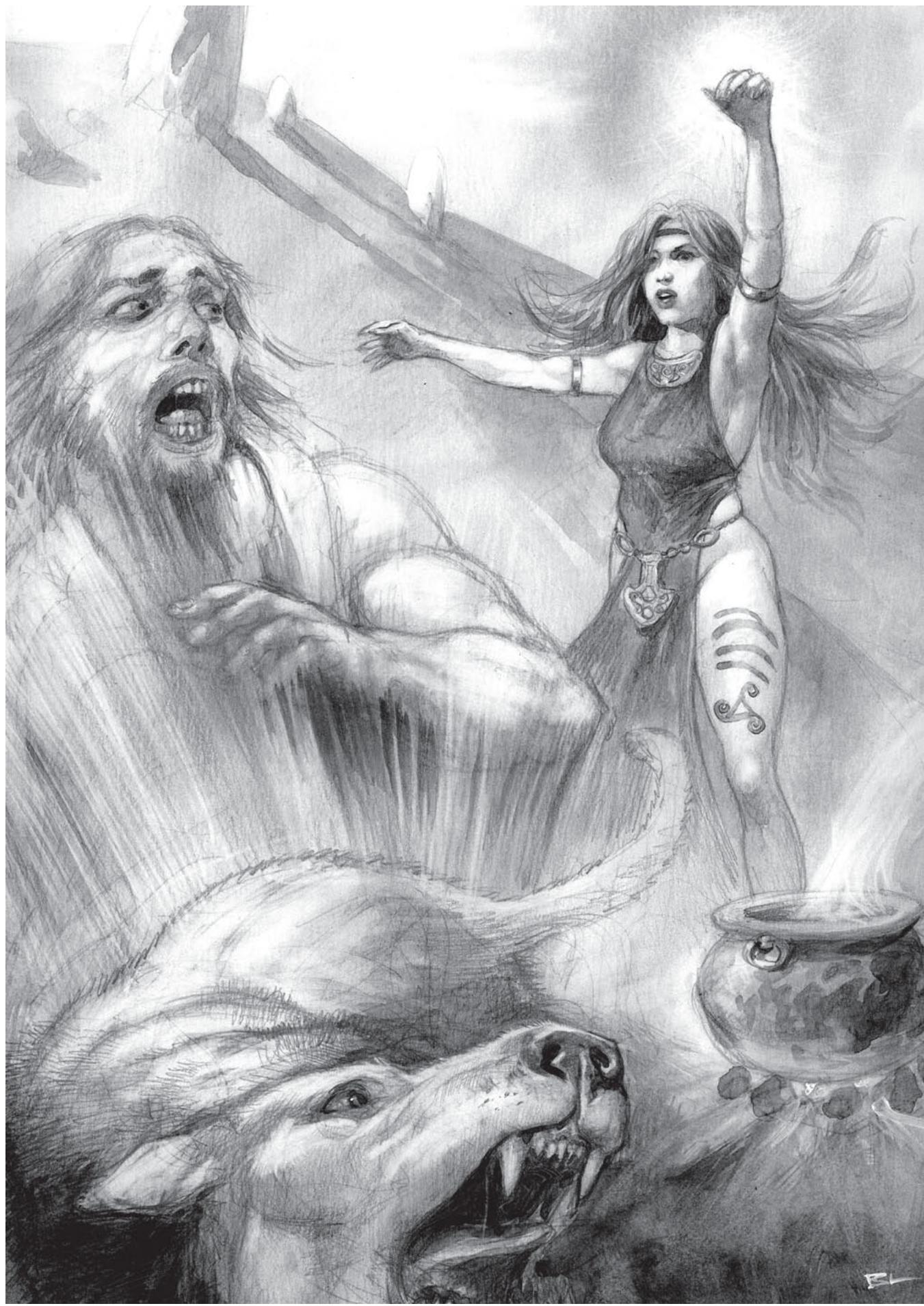
⊕ ORDER OF HERETIES

To members of the Order, the gallows-tree vigil is a test of dedication and will. By undergoing such trials, a magus proves himself worthy of the power of the runes. With the runes, the *vitkar* magus is able to impose his will upon reality. Outside of independent Hermetic *vitkar* and seiðr workers among House Ex Miscellanea, only three of the larger houses deal with Norse magic and the power of the runes in any great degree. A few members of House Tytalus undergo the gallows-tree vigil as a personal test of their own resolve and endurance, typically using the powers of *galdr* and the runes to augment their already impressive magical arsenals. Members of House Thig sometimes seek out knowledge of the runes in order to incorporate them into computer hardware and programs. Much of the Norse magic undertaken by the Order is the work of House Verditus. Smithwork is the House's forte, and many learn the secrets of the runes and the arts of Weyland so that they might incorporate them into everything from classic gold bracelets to modern rune-carved handguns.

VERBENA

At the heart of the Verbena's magic lies the concept of the World Tree. It is the foundation of the universe and it connects all that exists. Each Verbena is a "sacred branch" of the World Tree, and by drawing upon her sacred connection to the World Tree, and through it all other things, she is able to work powerful magics. Norse practices formed part of the Tradition's heart at its foundation, and it is no accident that Yggdrasill is the foundation for the magic used by Verbena throughout Northern Europe.

Norse mages within the Verbena come in many shapes. Those who follow the most ancient practices, such as seiðr working and learning rune magic through the gallows-tree vigil, are found among the Twister of Fate (the roots of the tree that is the Verbena). Modern day *spá-kona* act as the hearts of their communities, offering advice and healing in the traditional ways of the wise woman. Smithcrafters work to keep old crafts and traditions alive. Both are found among the Gardeners of the Tree (the Tradition's trunk), where they also work as historians, genealogists and lore keepers, and the Moonseekers (the branches), working as teachers, storytellers and explorers. Finally, two factions among the Lifeweavers (the seeds of future growth) employ Norse magic. Verbena technomancers work to combine the ancient arts of smithcraft and weaving magic with modern tools and materials, while members of the Circle of Hecate, a constantly changing and evolving sect of female Verbena who seek power and influence in the realms of business and politics, employ the arts of seiðr working among their vast collection of magical edges.





SINGING BY MOONLIGHT: EUROPEAN SHAMANISM

Everywhere the human soul stands between a hemisphere of light and another of darkness on the confines of two everlasting hostile empires — Necessity and Free Will.

— Thomas Carlyle, *Essays*



Sandra came skidding into the library and plowed into her twin, Bruce.

"Shit, Sandra!" he yelled, and several older mages glared at them for interrupting their studies. Sandra frowned back at them, clutching her plain brown package tightly in her arms.

"Come with me, I've got to show you something!" she hissed in Bruce's ear. He paused for a moment, replaced the book he'd been glancing through and followed her.

At 14, the twins were the youngest mages in the chantry. Orphaned after their parents displeased a water spirit, Sandra and Bruce found themselves raised by mages not ready to deal with teens. Their guardians were of the opinion that the young twins had brought about their own Awakening through an encounter with a spirit during "play" with a Ouija board. Ushered quickly into the Order of Hermes, the twins were put under watch to make sure their curiosity and talents didn't kill them all.

Sandra felt they were expected to be stodgy and boring adults, skipping their childhood in the process. This was silly

to her; what use was magic when you were young — or any time, really — if you didn't enjoy it?

Sandra led her twin down the hall to the bedroom she shared with their mentor and closed the door, locking it with an Effect she had recently learned (which could, of course, be broken by anyone else they knew, but she enjoyed practicing).

"What did you get this time?" Bruce asked excitedly. Sandra had been corresponding with a mage in England whose address she'd stolen from a sheet of letters she'd seen on Maria's (her mentor's) desk. She had wondered if mages elsewhere were as boring as the ones around her, but Seamus had been exciting and fun, encouraging her enthusiasm for magic and promising not to tell Maria that they'd been writing to each other. He sometimes sent her little gifts, usually small trinkets like Saint's medals — Sandra had a thing for martyrs — but this package was too big for a medal.

Her eyes were shining as she unwrapped the box carefully. "In the letter he called them Ogham!" she said, and pulled a longish brown cloth bag from the package.

When she offered no further explanation, Bruce sighed. "OK, I'll bite," he said. "What's an 'Ah-ham'?" He reached out his hand to take the bag from her, and she slapped it back. She emptied the bag out on to the table and several long sticks fell out. They all looked as if they had been broken off different trees: they were all roughly the same size, and all were still covered in varying shades of bark, brown, green, black and white. "They're just sticks," he said dismissively.

"They're ancient Celtic divination tools, idiot. Like, really really old," she snapped. A piece of paper had fallen out onto the table with the sticks and she grabbed it. "And here are the instructions!"

Bruce saw that the sticks obviously came from different trees. Not having studied any wilderness flora or fauna, he had no idea what the different trees were, but the sticks all looked very old, and looked as if others had handled them a lot. While Sandra was reading the instructions on how to use the tool, he reached out again and snagged a stick. Its bark was light brown, and it looked as if someone had run a pocketknife down the last inch of one end, shaving off the bark and leaving a flat surface of exposed wood grain. Someone had carved an odd symbol that looked like a lowercase "t", or a cross, into the bare wood.

"So what do we do with them?" he asked. She waved him into silence as she read to herself.

"Most of this is boring history," she complained, and Bruce grinned. Sandra hated history, which drove their instructors crazy. She had no desire to learn the whys of the power inside of her; she just wanted to know the hows. "Seems this used to be their alphabet, 20 letters in all," she continued. "It's old, way old. People thought originally they were created by the Druids," Sandra snorted, "but the thinking now is that it predates them. It might even be from the Picts, who erected lots of standing stones in Britain. Poets used this system and invoked Bran, their god of inspiration."

"Bran? Like the flake?" Bruce asked, looking again at the Ogham stick in his hand.

"I think so. Doesn't look like a typo. Anyway, looks like we just throw them and decide what the future holds for us by this chart," she handed him the lengthy instructions and gathered the sticks into her hands.

Bruce perused the paper, and looked at his twin. "I dunno, Sandra, this looks pretty complicated," he said slowly.

"Oh come on," she said impatiently, trying her best to shuffle the sticks around in a random order without dropping them. "What could go wrong? We don't accurately identify our future? So what? I'm not going to make life decisions based on this; it's supposed to be fun!"

Bruce remembered how much "fun" they'd had with that Ouija board a couple of years ago, and had to silently disagree with her. However, he had never abandoned his twin before and was not about to now.

Sandra tossed the sticks out onto the table and they fell into a clump, five rolling away from the group. She looked at the slip of paper again. "OK, this funny looking one is

touching this one... and this one has rolled away and... hmm..." she muttered to herself. Bruce looked over her shoulder at the paper, and then at the layout on the table.

It was so clear to him, why couldn't she get it? He could easily see how the patterns fit together, and, with uncharacteristic presumption, he took the paper from her hand and studied it. Bruce usually let his twin take the lead, and Sandra was so surprised at his behavior she didn't protest, and instead stared at his rapt face as he interpreted the sticks with ease.

"There," he pointed to two that had rolled away. "You will be betrayed by one you hold dear, and lose something you just gained. But there," he pointed to the clump of tangled sticks, "you will gain even more in the long run. Your boldness will lead you to trouble here," he pointed to another stick, "and here is the death of... something or someone. The position of the stick makes it unsure.... I can't tell if it's someone you like or hate. And this stick that rolled the farthest represents a journey, and," he consulted the sheet again, "it'll be soon." He stopped at the look on her face. "What?"

"How are you getting all of this so fast? I can't figure it out!" Sandra said, grabbing the instructions from his hand and studying them closely.

"You can't? It's so clear to me," Bruce admitted. "All I need to do is learn better what the sticks mean, but their patterns are obvious."

"M-maybe we should take these to Maria," Sandra said, looking back at the sticks.

"You really think she should know about this?" asked Bruce. "She won't believe us if we tell her."

The door behind them opened, Sandra's locking Effect dissolving easily. "Figured I'd find you two in here," Maria said pleasantly, entering the room. "With the ripples of your clumsy locking Effect mucking around the chantry. You need to learn some restraint and perhaps some skill. But I wanted to ask you," she continued, looking at the sticks on the table, "what did Seamus send you this time, Sandra?"

"Um," Sandra said, avoiding Maria's dark eyes. "Seamus?"

"Yes, the young man in the UK with whom you've been exchanging letters. He has a very clever way of getting in touch with people that are in hard-to-reach places, even you. I've been waiting for him to send you something with a little more substance than those trinkets. Ah," she said, picking up the instructions. "Very clever of him. That's all you two need, a divination tool." Sandra and Bruce exchanged puzzled looks.

Maria looked up from the instruction sheet to glance at the layout on the table. "Who threw these?"

"I-I did, Maria. Bruce thinks he knows what it means, but I'm not seeing it," Sandra said, glaring at her twin. "And how did you know about—"

"And what did the sticks tell you, Bruce?" the mentor asked.

Bruce hesitated, and then repeated his interpretations of the sticks for her. Her face was impassive as she checked the instructions Seamus had sent.

"Are you familiar with these tools?" Bruce asked.

"I knew of their existence," Maria said, picking up one of the sticks. "I have never used them before. Although," she looked at the instruction sheet again, "it seems Seamus was mistaken for the first time since I've known him. It is not your sister with the talent this time; you're the one with the divination aptitude, Bruce. Gather the sticks and come with me, please."

Bruce paused, but knew that one didn't disobey Maria, even when she was deceptively pleasant. He quickly gathered the divination tool and shot an apologetic glance to his sister for getting her new toy confiscated so quickly.

"And as for you, Sandra," Maria said, as Bruce carefully stuck the sticks in the bag with the paper, "your brother seems to have had a pretty clear telling of the future, although I'd have to study Seamus' letter to make 100% sure. I'll talk to you tonight about what he said. It sounds pretty serious." With that, she left the room. Bruce trailed behind her, mouthing an apology to his angry sister.

"Oh," Maria said, as she stuck her head back in the room. "And you're to stop all contact with your pen pal. I know he's more excitement than we can give you here, but excitement can also mean danger. He's too much trouble for you, Sandra."

Sandra sat, stunned. In one swift motion, her pen pal had been exposed (and Maria had known all along!), the very first magical item she'd ever gotten had been taken away from her, and her brother was stealing the spotlight. She fought back angry tears. Seamus had sent the sticks to her, not her stupid follow-behind brother.

She walked resolutely over to her closet, grabbed a backpack, and started stuffing underwear and shirts into it. She retrieved the secret stash of money — \$400 — that was hidden in a pair of boots she never wore. She'd leave when it got dark, and find a way to England to learn from a real mage who wasn't afraid of real magic.

• • •

Eric lay on the pavement, blood running freely from his nostrils. He grimaced and regretted it immediately: his nose felt broken, and his head like it had been split open. He looked up from his prone position to the victor of this little skirmish, a Euthanatos mage he knew only as C.J.

None the worse for wear, C.J. stood impeccable and impossibly tall, grinning over Eric. The tips of his shiny wingtips were almost brushing Eric's ear. *Fuck, I didn't even hit him once*, he thought miserably. C.J.'s brown leather coat hung still around him, somber and morbid despite the wind. Eric had a moment to wonder why the hell C.J. maintained such a vain Effect. C.J. had already kicked Eric's ass; he needed no parlor tricks to intimidate.

"Nice try, little dude," said C.J. in his deep, foreboding voice. Eric wondered again why the Euthanatos worked so hard in creating their scary image. He would bet a pint of the blood running out of his nose that C.J.'s real voice wasn't that deep. He wondered if C.J.'s mother would recognize him on the phone. He

realized his mind was wandering, and worked hard to focus again on C.J.'s ominous voice. "...what I was going to do with you," C.J. continued. "Beating you down seemed, well, like summoning a demon to shred a document. You can't understand the things I've seen, the things I've studied. There is so much you can learn if you just stop wasting your time with your piddly little tree-hugging and actually experience what the world has to offer, which is more than you'll ever see..." C.J. trailed off.

Eric remained prone. It was safer than trying to get up. Moreover, he wasn't sure if he could make it without blacking out. He felt ready to agree to anything, following a better path in life, not wasting his time with tree-hugging, cursing his mother's name—if he could just be allowed to leave in safety.

C.J. folded his body and sat smoothly down on the pavement next to Eric's head. Eric flinched involuntarily. This was bad. Eric could make it past the sound thrashing he'd received already, but he had nothing left with which to fight. He wasn't sure how much more he could take, and it was a very cold realization that C.J. could finish him off with little or no effort.

"I've wanted to try out some of the things I've been working out of some old texts," the large mage said conversationally. "It's very exciting to try out some new stuff, and I love getting the opportunity!" He patted Eric's shoulder softly and said, "You don't mind trying it out with me, do you? I'm new at this geas thing."

He appeared to think for a moment, and then added, "Well, that's not to say I haven't tried it yet. I have tried it several times, but the results have been painful at times. Sometimes to me, of course, but more often to the subject. But don't worry, I think I have it right this time..."

He grinned and placed both hands on Eric's head, cupping his skull. Eric flinched and tried to pull away. C.J. held on tighter and admonished, "Now, now, don't fight. This won't hurt. At least, I don't think it will. I'm not sure, honestly.... Now what shall we do to your little mind?" Eric whimpered and was still. There was nothing he could do. He waited.

C.J. muttered softly to himself, but Eric was close enough to hear. "OK, the classic ones are not to attack the caster, but he can't hurt me anyway. There was the old 'can't eat dog meat' compulsion, but that's not real applicable these days, except I don't know what the Ecstasy freaks do anymore. There's the enforcement of polite honor codes, but he obviously doesn't give a shit about that. How about... yeah, that'll work," he said, and the pressure on Eric's head increased.

Eric cried out involuntarily, having no idea what C.J. was talking about, but sure it meant his death. As C.J. concentrated, Eric's head began to feel light, and the world grew fuzzy. He thought he could hear a voice, a soft, friendly voice, a suggestion that there was something he might do. It just might be a good idea. Just a suggestion. Nothing serious. Just a little something, that's all. Might be a good idea. Yeah. In fact, he couldn't not do it. But it was just a little something.

Two weeks later...

Eric stood over the body of his lover, Sylvia. It felt oddly familiar, but he couldn't remember when he'd been in a position like this, with a helpless body at his feet. Sylvia lay bleeding from a dozen wounds, and she looked up at him, eyes hazy with pain and confusion. Eric watched the blood run out of her, knowing he should help her, but unable to do anything but watch and wonder. Who had killed her? Why had they done such a thing to someone who had never hurt anyone? Why couldn't he help her? And why was there blood all over his hands?

Sylvia looked up at him and blood tinged her lips. "Don't cry when you realize what you've done, Eric," she whispered, and died.

Eric dropped the kitchen knife that he didn't remember picking up. It was smeared with gore. He didn't remember his trip to her flat, or anything else for the past couple of days, now that he thought about it. The last thing he remembered was a challenge from that damnable Euthanatos.

He closed his eyes and saw his Avatar, who normally manifested itself to him as a tree nymph, emerge from a shadow within his mind. She looked wan and tired, as if put through some hardship.

"What did he do to my mind?" Eric whispered. She remained silent and stared at him sadly. Tears began to run down his cheeks from behind closed lids as the memories began, slowly, to return.

• • •

Red shifted uncomfortably in his seat. These tiny European cars could fit in your goddamn pocket, and here he was crammed into one, crushing his tux. He remembered the advice from his friend Carl: always arrive early to a party you plan on crashing.

Luckily, he wasn't crashing this one alone. Gold and Indigo were meeting him up the road from the remote German mansion with mocked-up invites they hoped would get them in. He hoped this was worth the cost of the tux, the rental of the tiny car, and the hassle of the stupid mask he'd have to wear.

He parked on the street a ways up from the manor—he'd cased out the place yesterday to make sure he could find it in the dark—and searched in his backpack for the mask Gold had given him.

It was a thing of beauty, a finely crafted black mask in the shape of a bull's head, covered in coarse black hair and with horns of what looked an awful lot to Red like ivory curving out from the forehead. The eyeholes seemed large for him, but when Red slipped the mask over his head, it fit him perfectly. The item stank of magic, but when Gold had handed over the mask Red got the feeling that he was not supposed to ask anything about it.

He had been instructed to put the mask on and wait outside of the car, which he had thought was damned obvious actions for a crasher, as legit partygoers would have the valet park their cars. But Gold hadn't steered him wrong yet in his couple of months of spending time with her. She and her largely silent partner, Indigo, were Cultists of Ecstasy Red had met through a mutual friend. He'd had some time to travel in Germany and Ashad had given him Gold's number. He had ended up staying a lot longer than he expected, but it had been worth it. Gold claimed to know some serious shit from a long

time ago, but refused to show him any of it — yet. He hoped tonight he could learn something, or see if she was telling the truth. He slipped the mask over his eyes, and immediately felt intoxicated by the power emanating from it. He didn't tap into it, preferring to wait for the party and Gold's guidance.

Cars roared by on the narrow road, and Red tried his best to look unassuming, waiting by his tiny car with a bull's mask on his head. He fervently hoped that no one would stop him and ask him what he was doing, or even if he needed help.

He heard a crackle coming from the woods near his car. He peered into the moonlit trees and heard a low woman's voice say "Red, over here. In the woods."

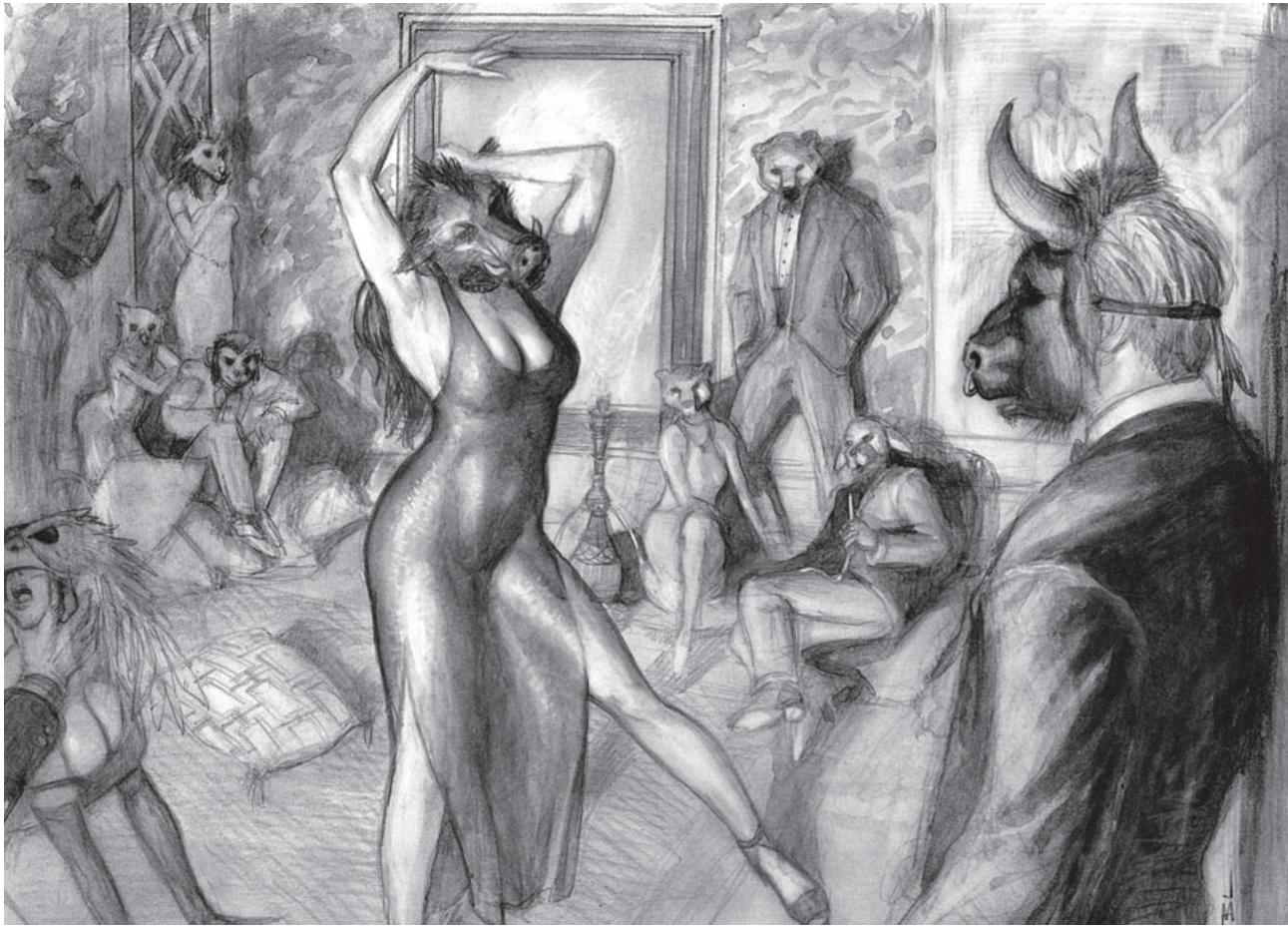
With one dismayed look at his rented tux, Red stumbled into the woods. Gold stood there, her body resplendent in a long golden evening gown that shimmered in the moonlight, her curvy body perfectly garbed. He hoped his disappointment didn't show in his eyes, though, as he stared in horror at her face. She wore a finely made and—yes, still quite ugly—mask of a boar sow. It was made of bristly black hair; four tusks made of the same ivory-like material as Red's horns curved from the lips of the mask. The eyeholes were small, and even Gold's beautiful amber eyes looked piggy when she regarded him in the moonlight. Red wondered what could have made her don such a mask. Why didn't she take the gold-and-brown eagle mask? Still, she was beautiful, and he knew what she looked like under the mask. He found himself wishing, not for the first time, that Indigo didn't exist.

But exist he did, and stood slightly behind Gold in the mask of a gray wolf. He said nothing but nodded towards Red. Indigo placed his hand on Gold's shoulder, and she turned and beckoned to Red. They began to walk, Indigo and Gold finding no problem making their way through the dark woods in their eveningwear. Red stumbled occasionally, unable to see very well in the dark woods.

"Nearly there," Gold said, her voice not muffled at all by her mask. Red remained quiet, and Indigo was his usual stoic self. Red could now see the mansion, bright torches illuminating the edge of the wood. He could hear music, wild music, drifting from the inner rooms. He smiled in spite of himself and could feel the mask's magic intoxicating him.

Getting in was no problem. Red could feel Indigo's magic shielding them and they passed from the woods to the valet area unnoticed, and their invitations were accepted with no question. Inside, he could see that they fit right in; everyone had beautiful animal masks, were dressed well, and were already entering their own form of intoxication. He was chatting with a woman in a feathered eagle mask—much like the one Gold should have worn—when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned; Gold stood there, and he could see the look in her eye. With a polite apology to his new friend, he followed Gold out of the main ballroom.

Several masked people lounged on pillows in a separate room, some of them swaying to ecstatic music. He could smell opium in the air, and the music already had several people relaxing on the sofas and large floor pillows. Gold stood in the



center of the room, with all eyes riveted on her. She started to dance, and Red leaned against the wall as his legs threatened to give way. Pig mask or no, he wanted her more than ever.

Indigo's wolfish face also watched her as he sat on a pillow in the corner. A woman in a black horse mask swayed next to him, cleavage threatening to spill from her loose blue dress. Red saw him glance at her and then back at Gold.

Gold swayed and undulated, hands raising above her head and slowly inching down her body. The music was loud and intense, a fast techno beat, but Gold's movements didn't move with them at all, although she didn't seem out of step. She was perfect, so very perfect, moving her hands to caress her breasts and then over her slim waist and belly. When Red moved his eyes back up to her swine head, he saw her little eyes were riveted on him. Not Indigo, him.

Red glanced quickly over to Indigo and saw him absorbed in the swaying woman next to him, his hands caressing her back and shoulders as she moved to Gold's rhythms, not the music's. Gold danced over to Red, taking small jaunty steps that made her breasts sway in her dress, and took his hands. He accompanied her to the middle of the room, and danced with her.

He had seen Gold dance with Indigo before, but he was sure it was nothing like this. Although he had never danced with her before, it felt as if they had been partners all their lives.

He matched every move she made; their rhythm was perfect. Her hands flowed over his body, lightly touching here, discreetly unbuttoning there. He wished he could kiss her, but he knew removal of his mask was *verboten*. He had a feeling he couldn't take it off even if he tried. As the dance movements got more insistent, he lost himself in her, in the magic of the masks, in the cries of pleasure from their companions, the subtle shift from clothed dancing to naked copulation.

Naked except for the masks. The black sow looked up at him as he mated with her, and as he approached orgasm, he felt the magic and understood. He would be reborn from her, she was the great Mother and he was the initiate, she would devour him and he would return stronger, tougher. He came to her as a calf but would be reborn as a mighty bull.

The clarity of the ritual hit him as if a large bell had been rung painfully close to his head, and he came, crying out. He could see the old wolf, Indigo, rolling naked on the floor with the horse, and Red imagined that Indigo was watching him, but he could have been mistaken. He rolled off Gold, who propped herself on her elbows and regarded him as he lay there panting.

"The first realization is always the most painful. The next step will be easier," she whispered. Red lay on his back, still seeing the Black Sow devouring him. He welcomed it and awaited rebirth.

• • •

Ursula looked around the high school gym without removing her sunglasses. "I really can't believe you brought me here. No, wait, I can't believe I actually came. That's the disturbing part."

Judith stood beside her, surveying the familiar scene in front of her, her upper lip curled unconsciously. "We've been over this. I'm here because it's my reunion. You're here to guard me in case of mishap," she told Ursula, and went to the gaudy snacks table to procure a glass of punch.

Her friend followed her. "Look, I know you want revenge, but you're so much more than they are right now. Why can't you see that?" she asked quietly, ignoring the stares from other members of the class of 1993. Judith had asked her to accompany her to her reunion; she had been wise not to ask Ursula to drop her usual garb of sunglasses and denim jacket. Ursula stubbornly maintained that she never knew when her Effects would blow up in her face, and she preferred protection at all times. Judith had, in Ursula's opinion, lost her common sense and had forgone all normal clothing, and even her weapons, in favor of a floral PTA mom's dress and sensible navy flats.

Judith also ignored the stares, and grabbed a glass of punch from the table. The woman filling cups at the table ("REMEMBER ME? Anne Greer") searched Judith's face and then her chest, looking for a nametag. Judith didn't have one. "Anne Greer" started to speak, but Judith turned her back on her and faced Ursula.

"Look," she hissed. "You Awakened early. I didn't. I came into my magic when I was 19, when the scars from this place were fresh. I know the scars don't matter, and these people don't matter. But you don't understand how much you wish with all your soul that something like Awakening would happen." Her voice got soft and she stared around the gym at her ex-classmates. They greeted, squealed, hugged, and pretended to forget old grudges as they met each other for the first time in 10 years.

"You get picked on every... goddamn... day," Judith continued. "They treat you like a grub that squirms in the dirt, and then they go off for their glamorous lives of football and cheerleading and Boones' Farm wine and date rape. You lie in your bed and nurse the bruises to your skin and your ego, you cry and you wish as hard as you can for something, some power, something that will make it possible for you to get back at them. And nothing ever comes, because wishes don't come true, and you get up the next morning and go back to school for it to start again."

Ursula said nothing, not liking the blank look in Judith's face. She hoped they weren't here for violence; she had no worries concerning her abilities as bodyguard, but slaughtering Sleepers for revenge was below even her stretched moral code.

"Then, one day, after you escaped, you learn things you never thought were possible. You learn that the power is there, and it's yours and oh, if you'd only had it three years ago," she turned to Ursula and grinned.

"Um, yeah, Judith, you're not going to go all Columbine on me, are you? I'm here to protect you, but if you're out for slaughter, I don't want any part of it," Ursula said, uneasy.

Judith made a face at her, and Ursula relaxed; this was more like Judith. "Did I tell you much about my studies in Poland several years ago?" she asked, and turned back to the table and started to fill a plate with tiny sandwiches.

"Uh, no, I don't think so," Ursula answered her, confused by the sudden topic switch.

Judith swallowed a sandwich in one bite, made a face, and put the plate down. "I checked out some local history while visiting some relatives there," she said. "I discovered some old magic that runs in my family, generations back. There were these shaman-types that used to reside in the small villages called kolduny. They were respected, but feared as well. 'Cause if they didn't get invited to every wedding, and get respected in just the right way, they got pissed and spread mischief around the town. And you just don't think about mischief as being serious until your two-year-old spills grape juice on the white couch, or until your tires get slashed, or until gremlins infiltrate your Messer Schmidt and disable your navigation. Those don't actually hurt anyone, it's just mischief." She fingered a stone around her neck.

"I searched through some of my great-grandfather's library and discovered some very interesting stuff. His books dated back a couple of centuries and my grandmother was so delighted that I was showing interest in my heritage that she let me have them. I've been studying them, learning a lot about my people, both as a Pole and as a mage. My grandmother also gave me this stone that belonged to her father, I've been working on using it as my focus," she said, showing the rough blue stone to Ursula.

She grinned ruefully and continued, "Admittedly, they used magic in a much different way than we did. I nearly killed my neighbor when I just tried to make him trip on the sidewalk. He recovered faster than I did from my headache. I figured that fucking with this magic on a casual level was a bad idea."

"Jude, fucking with any magic on a casual level is a bad idea," Ursula reminded her.

Judith waved her hand dismissively. "Anyway, it's taken a couple of years and private study, but I've got one of their simpler Effects mastered. The simple act of spoiling, spreading mischief, not really hurting anyone...."

"How did you do it?" Ursula asked.

"It takes a great deal of concentration, because they didn't approach the magic like we do. They didn't think in terms of Spheres — they just did it. I had to study a lot of history to get the feel of the times, and how the shamans thought. And it was so damn long ago, it's hard to condition your mind to not think like you've been taught for years and years. It was learning a new way to walk. But I got it, finally. It takes more of a malevolent nature and focusing the Sphere magic to act like you want it to," she said.

Judith turned from Ursula and stared long at a man, who may have once been muscular but was now just fat. Ursula didn't know what she was doing, but she felt a slight backwash of power. She thought she sensed Prime being used, but it did

feel different, as Judith had said. The man didn't react or even seem any different.

"Geoff Woodward will have lots of trouble getting it up for a while," Judith said, grinning.

"See, Urs, it's just mischief. Just like all they did to me was 'just' tease. I've been looking forward to this night for 14 years. Let's enjoy it."

Ursula smiled, understanding at last, and her eyes did a sweep of the room. "Watch what you do with the tall guy near the stage," she warned. "He looks like he noticed your working. He's watching you. I... don't think he's that powerful though."

Judith looked delighted. "Even better," she said. "That's Larry Wise, the basketball player that never would go out with me. This is going to be a very good night to relive memories, Ursula."

• • •

The song came drifting out of the woods, completely unexpected, as Logan had neither seen nor heard anyone in the area since passing a couple of hikers several miles back. He stepped into the shadow of a tall tree and listened, trying to locate the singer.

*I whispered truths that weren't mine
I struck stone with sword
I lied to thieves
Under the sipped moon
Hiding from the bitten sun
You stayed alone
I held the power of the master
And the wonder of the novice
I taught the imbeciles
By the God, the father, you are held
Harm me and mine none
Until you are free.*

Logan had never heard a voice as haunting as this one. It was a man's voice, a pure tenor, and it entranced him. He looked around, still trying to find the singer. He felt a wave of bliss wash over him, and he sat down, leaned against the tree and closed his eyes, willing the music never to stop.

He opened his eyes with a snap as he heard a crunch of feet on leaves next to him. The music had stopped, and it was dusk. He had slept the entire afternoon away. He struggled to get to his feet, and discovered he couldn't move. Panic rising in his throat, he peered up at the owner of the feet.

An old man stood there — incredibly old. His face was rough and heavily lined, and his lips caved in on his face implying no (or few) teeth. He leaned heavily on a staff, and squinted through white hair that fell in his face in dirty gray curls. "What you doin' here?" he asked with a voice both raspy and mushy.

"Nothing. Just passing through," Logan said, still struggling in vain to rise. "I meant no harm! Please let me go!"

"Quit your struggling, lad, you're here 'til I say you can go," he said, and slammed his walking stick into the ground beside Logan's outstretched leg for emphasis. "You are not supposed to be here. No one is supposed to be here, only me. This is my place. These are my woods." He sounded proud, but there was a petulant whine to his voice.

"If no one else is here, who was singing?" Logan asked, leaning against the tree in defeat and looking around.

"Wha? That was my binding charm, you fool. You haven't noticed you're bound?" the man sounded genuinely surprised.

"Well, yes, but... that was you? The singing I mean?"

The cackle that followed Logan's astonished comment was as unlike the previous singing as a sound could be. The old man slammed his stick into the dirt again, still laughing, and Logan felt the binding on him break. He scrambled to his feet as the man began to limp away, still chuckling.

"I'd feared you might be a threat, lad; I smelled the power on you. But you just go along your way now, you're free," he called over his shoulder.

Logan watched the old man shuffle away, puzzled. He paused for only a moment before running after him, calling for him to wait. He caught up with him easily, and touched him on the bony shoulder. The man looked at the hand on his shoulder, then raised his eyes and glared at Logan, who hastily dropped his hand.

"I've set you free, lad. You shouldn't ask for a better gift than that. What more do you want?" he asked gruffly.

"Nothing, I just... I've never experienced power like yours, that's all. What's your name? Can you show me how you did that?" Logan asked awkwardly.

The old man brayed laughter again. "Lad, I bound you because I thought you had enough power to be a threat. You showed yourself to be an idiot. Why would I then take you as a student?" he asked, and trudged away from Logan again.

The young mage stood, frustrated, and watched him go. The man turned after about 20 feet and called out to him, "Ere, do me a service, and I'll give you three things: My name, the binding song, and safe passage south."

"Safe passage south?" Logan muttered to himself. He had been traveling west. But he knew better than to make the old man call him an idiot again. "What is the service, sir?" he asked.

"Plow the morning with the dew, and grow me a warrior," the man called back to him, and retreated into the woods, cackling loudly.

Logan shook his head. "So what will I need safe passage south for after I do this thing?" he yelled.

"You pull a warrior from the dawn; it'll piss off the other warriors of the dawn. Pissing off the warriors of the dawn will alert the warriors of the dusk. North keeps his eye on all goings on, but South doesn't care. It's the only way you can go. But if you want the song, and my name, you'll do it," the old man explained, and then disappeared into the woods.

Logan sighed and wondered if it was worth it. He started walking westward and thought about the song, how pure the man's voice had been, and remembered the feeling of total helplessness as the feeble old man stood above him.

Logan stopped, and wondered if he could really do it. He smiled briefly, and turned back eastward to prepare for the dawn.

THE SHAMAN

Warrior. Sage. Wise-woman. Bard. Psychopomp. Prophet. Healer. Fortuneteller. All of these roles can be tied into one title: Shaman. Although the word "shaman" is used almost worldwide to imply a magic-using wise man or woman, each region seems to have shamans with differing powers. Those that practice the shamanistic traditions hail from ancient cultures the world over, from Asia, Siberia and both North and South America. These workers of old magic were spread all over the world, functioned in drastically different societies, and yet had very similar spiritual methods. Shamans worldwide each seem to have similar functions within society, but with different powers.

Shamanism is defined worldwide as a practice of spiritual magic, the practitioner having a special link to the spirit world and animal powers. This special link set the shaman apart, and gave him access to powers with which to heal or harm. The shaman would see the world as a living thing: everything driven by a force or a spirit that was powerful in its own right. The natural forces, such as the sea, the rivers, the trees and mountains, all had spirits or powers within them that at the least had to be recognized and mostly had to be placated and respected. The shaman viewed animal totems as powers with which to link, and would borrow either the force of the animal or its form to do his work.

In this chapter, we explore the shamans of Europe and the British Isles. The topic of European shamanism is diverse enough to fill its own book, let alone its own chapter. Even within this relatively small geographical area shamans had differing roles. While the east German tribes worshipped the animal totems and valued trips to the spirit world, Finland's greatest sage used music to communicate with the spirit world and to work his magic, and the Irish and English valued the wise warrior as their shaman.

Using the word "shaman" makes *Mage* players think automatically of Dreamspeakers and their shamanistic magic. However, the magic of the old European shamans was incredibly varied, and it has aspects that make its study worthwhile to almost any Tradition.

Europe's rich history makes it a grand place to explore forgotten magic with a chronicle. Where else can you find such variety of cultures, each ancient people having their own distinct, yet similar flavor of shamanism? Mages of today have much to learn from these dead arts.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

Most every Tradition has a reason to explore the magic of the European shamans. Dreamspeakers obviously might be interested, as they are the descendants of the Otherworld-traveling mages of old. Their desire to capture the lost magic of their Tradition should be great; even though they have kept with the old ways more faithfully than any other Tradition, they will be surprised at the extent of the knowledge lost.

The Cult of Ecstasy will be intrigued with the trances used by the old shamans. Many sorcerers of the Germanic tribes found it easier to enter the Umbra by methods that would seem familiar to today's Ecstatic mage. Trances achieved by days upon days of dancing and drinking allowed the shamans to communicate better with the spirits in the Otherworld. An Ecstatic mage would undoubtedly become more powerful by adding these techniques to his already extensive repertoire for pushing the threshold of pleasure and pain.

Some shamans of early Europe taught that the death of the physical made the spirit stronger, and myths of rebirth were common. The mages of the Euthanatos Tradition might find that this theory fits in with much of what they believe. Shamanistic animism teaches that the Black Sow of Britain devours the physical body during rituals so that the spiritual body can be reborn. While this theory doesn't fit with the Euthanatos belief of death in a literal instead of metaphorical sense, it does bear study.

Even the stuffy Order of Hermes and the gadget-loving Sons of Ether have reasons to study what the shamans had to teach. The mere fact that such powerful magic was lost to such an extent rankles the very nerves of an Order mage; it must be recovered and taught again. The Sons of Ether will be interested in the physical structures of Britain—Stonehenge, other stone circles, mounds, etc. There are theories that the ancient structures were a kind of primitive computer, just another huge gadget. Finding out what it was for, and seeing if one can tap the energy of it, would keep a mage of this Tradition busy for some time.

In fact, the lost magic of the shamans has something to offer mages of any Tradition, if those mages have the time and dedication to discover hidden magic.

THE SALMON: IRELAND



Ireland is where strange tales begin and happy endings are possible.

— Charles Haughey, *Daily Telegraph* (London, July 14, 1988)

Much of the magical history of Ireland is revealed through its poems and tales of epic heroes, the most notable being Fionn mac Cumhaill and CúChullain. Irish epics told the stories of the famous kings and warriors of this island, known for their wisdom or their legendary weapons.

Ireland was thick with magic during these legendary times, and the shamans and warriors had little problem tapping it and using it towards their goals. The people considered the salmon to be a symbol of great wisdom, and it was considered sacred to Irish shamans and warriors, as they channeled its strength and wisdom in their magic.

FIÖNN MAC CUMHAILL

This most famous of Irish warriors was born to Cumhaill mac Baiscne, the chieftain of the Fianna, and Muirne, granddaughter of one of the fae folk. With the blood of the Garou Kinfolk from his father and the *sidhe* from his mother, Fionn was marked a special child from the beginning. Cumhaill was killed by Goll mac Morna before he could see his son born, and Muirne, fearing that the mac Morna would seek the baby, gave Fionn to two women, a druid and a warrior, to raise.

At the age of 10, Fionn left his guardians to search for wisdom, and he fell into the service of the warrior poet Finegas. Fionn served Finegas until he was 17, which was when Finegas caught the coveted Salmon of Knowledge, who had feasted on the hazelnuts of wisdom growing from a tree in the Umbra. Fionn burned his finger preparing the salmon for his master and stuck his thumb in his mouth, gaining all of the wisdom and knowledge of the future the salmon had to offer. Finegas discovered Fionn had tasted it and was displeased that the boy had taken the wisdom he had hoped to gain, but realized there was nothing he could do about it. He allowed Fionn to finish his meal. Fionn later had other opportunities to gain more wisdom and powers of prophesy, such as drinking from the well of the moon.

Fionn left Finegas to retake his father's place in the Fianna as head of that legendary warrior band. He saved Teamhair, the palace of the High King, from the yearly assault of the fae folk (ostensibly distant relatives of Fionn himself) with the help of his horrible spear and magical cloak. After defeating the faerie prince with his spear, he claimed the leadership of the Fianna tribe with the blessings of the relieved king, aided no doubt by his familial connections with the tribe and his Garou Kinfolk heritage. He then led the Fianna against mac Morna's clan and finally killed Goll mac Morna, his father's murderer.

Soon after his triumph, Fionn's old mentor, the warrior woman Fiachel, summoned him to the Umbra. He battled a

great wyrm for three days, equipped with an enchanted oak shield and his spear Birga, and took many wounds. Fiachel spent three earth years healing Fionn, although it seemed like only a week had passed in the Umbra.

It was in the Umbra that a druid cursed his sister with a shapechange curse, causing her to assume the form of a dog. She gave birth to two sons, Bran and Sceolan. Unable to change them into human form, Fionn took them as his trusted hunting dogs. It was these two who discovered Fionn's first wife, Sadb, who had been similarly cursed in deer form. Fionn changed her to human form, they married, and Sadb gave birth to Oisin; she was then cursed into deer form again and left Fionn.

It is said that Fionn never died, but is sleeping in the Umbra until Ireland needs him again.

CÚCHULLAIN

CúChullain's origin is a legend in itself. His mother conceived him the night she entered her marriage bed, having recently vomited out a child she had conceived from drinking a glass of water.

As a child, he outplayed all other children and attracted the attention of the Court of King Conor. Called before the Hall of Heroes, he uttered his famous line, "I care not whether I die tomorrow or next year, if only my deeds live after me." He lived up to this boast indeed, and had hundreds of stories told of his mighty deeds.

Among CúChullain's feats was his single-handed defense of Ulster against the queen of Connaught, Medb. He also defeated the warrior woman Aoife, sparing her life only when she agreed to call off her forces, welcome him to her bed and bear him a son. Sadly, CúChullain bade her place a *geas* on the boy, named Conlaoch, for him to tell no one his name, make way for no one and refuse no one combat. This doomed Conlaoch, for when the boy came to his father seven years later and did not break his *geas*, he was forced to subdue or kill many of CúChullain's men. CúChullain faced him in combat and nearly lost to his son. He ended the battle when he used his enchanted spear to rip the boy's stomach open.

CúChullain's power manifested itself in many feats he performed in battle. The salmon-leap was a mighty jump he would use to cross rivers and frighten his enemies in battle. It was said he gained more and more wisdom when he used the salmon-leap. He was most famous for his warp-spasm, a fury that would overtake his body and cause him to change into a hideous shape, after which he was able to massacre 500 warriors. His body retained so much heat after his warp-spasm that he had to be dipped into three vats of water to cool off. Upon his entering the first, it would crack like a nut, his body heat bursting the copper seams. The second would boil with massive bubbles, and the third would be hot enough for "some men" to bear.

CúChullain also had his own *geasa* placed upon him: never to eat dog meat and to never refuse hospitality. He

knew his death was coming when the two *geasa* came into conflict with each other; an old woman he encountered on the road offered him to share her meal of dog meat.

CúChullain died in the middle of a battle, upright while propped against a rock. His dead hands kept grip on his spear and shield, and his enemies would not approach the body for days in fear that he was still alive.

ROLE OF THE SHAMAN WARRIOR

While these Irish warriors don't seem to embody the common view of "shaman," they both fill the roles. It is true that history primarily views CúChullain and Fionn as warriors, but their command of magic and their spiritual wisdom are analogous with shamans of the age.

Fionn mac Cumhaill spent much of his young life acquiring wisdom and prophetic powers. His travels within the Umbra are consistent with shamanic spirit flights and encounter with spirits, both friendly and hostile. Those other than Fionn practiced shamanic magic to a nefarious end, as many of his loved ones were shapechanged against their will. There is even question as to whether Fionn is dead or not. He could simply be waiting in the Umbra for a time when Ireland needs him again.

CúChullain was more of a straight-forward warrior than Fionn, but the magic surrounding his life was no less shamanistic in nature. Most of his battle-feats were connected to animism or an ecstatic shamanistic trance. When he performed his salmon-leap, he was channeling the power of the salmon, commonly used in Irish folklore as a symbol of wisdom. His warp-spasm took him into a shamanistic trance and allowed him to channel primal forces into his body, providing him great strength.

The Irish folklore shows us that a shaman doesn't simply have to sit around in a trance and speak with the spirits. A shaman has many roles, even that of a powerful warrior and leader, while still performing his more typical magic of travel to the Otherworld and connection with totem animals.

IRISH ROTES

FATHERLESS BIRTH [••••• ENTRØPY, ••••• LIFE, ••••• PRIME, ••••• SPIRIT]

Long before the Virgin Mary, women were giving birth without the touch of a man. Great men such as Väinämöinen and gods such as Raven were born from women who had not conceived them in the normal way. These conceptions were forced, using magic in the form of having the unsuspecting mothers swallowing tainted water, a wortleberry, or a pine needle. Väinämöinen's mother was thought to have been impregnated by the wind itself.

Despite this rote's name, these babies who are conceived through unusual means *do* actually have fathers — of a sort. Spirits are responsible for the majority; the only ones without an obvious father spirit are Raven and Taliesin, who fathered themselves. The rote's name refers to the fact that insemination was accomplished by means other than sexual.

To create the **Fatherless Birth**, it takes exquisite control of all involved Spheres. The target doesn't have to be a virgin, but cannot be someone who has conceived a child before or thinks that she might (i.e. she has a regular sexual partner). There are other things to consider — how the mother will react in this day and age of several options for unwanted pregnancies, whether the caster can (or wants to) control the mother and/or child, etc.

System: The target of the Effect must be of childbearing age. The mage uses Spirit to call the child's father, then adds Life and Prime to create the "seed" of the magical child (a berry, a special draught of water, or other innocuous but natural object which must be ingested by the target), and finally Entropy to place a destiny on the child (and to ensure that the seed causes a pregnancy).

Three successes are required on a single roll (no extended effects); extra successes strengthen the destiny. This rote is coincidental — nobody *really* believes you can get pregnant from a magical berry, so others simply assume the mother simply doesn't want to identify the father.

Old Faith: Autumn •••• (to instill a good destiny), Spring ••••• (to create life).

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••, Trickster •••••, Wise One •••••.

MAJOR GEAS [••••• ENTRØPY, ••••• MIND]

A more powerful and doom-ridden version of the **Minor Geas** (see below). The Major Geas is not chosen voluntarily — it is imposed on a target by the mage.

System: Similar to the **Binding Oath** Entropy Effect, except that Mind allows the mage to force the compulsion upon a target. If he breaks the rule imposed, willingly or not, it suffers the terrible effects of ill fate. Successes determine how long the Effect lasts. This rote is coincidental.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••, Wise One ••.

MINOR GEAS [•• ENTRØPY, •• MIND]

The *geasa* — an oath bond magical in nature — were commonly used in Ireland. They were oaths or promises that

DARK AGES SHAMANS

Although these magics are almost lost to modern times, they were still practiced by a few shamans as late as early medieval times. In other words, mages in the **Dark Ages: Mage** era might know these spells. These magics are mainly practiced by Spirit-Talkers. Each rote given here is also listed with its Spirit-Talker Pillars, for those players using **Dark Ages: Mage**. A few select rotes may also be known to the Old Faith mages of that time, and in these instances, their Pillars are also listed.

Those who do not play **Dark Ages: Mage** may freely ignore these extra tidbits of magical lore.

MANY VIRGIN BIRTHS

When we hear the words “virgin birth,” regardless of our religion (or lack thereof), we usually think of Jesus Christ, whose birth is so famous he often is called THE Virgin Birth, while Mary is THE Virgin.

However, there are stories—older than Christ, even—that feature women who have never known a man’s touch, but get pregnant nonetheless. These women show up so frequently in legends and epics, in fact, that one might wonder if there was specific magic used to impregnate a virgin....

The Finnish collection of epic poetry, the *Kalevala*, begins and ends with a virgin birth. Before the world was created, Ilmatar, a spirit of the air, encountered the sea and floated upon it. She was blown back and forth by the wind, which eventually made her pregnant. She carried the child for years (creating the world in the process with a broken eggshell, but that’s unimportant for now), and finally her baby grew restless and birthed himself. He became the sage Väinämöinen and was Finland’s greatest shaman.

In the last poem of the *Kalevala*, Marjatta is a fair maiden who is so intent on staying pure that she refuses to hook a stallion to her cart, nor will she hook up a mare that has been mounted by a stallion. She insists her cart be drawn by foals as pure as she is. She will not milk the cows nor touch any male livestock. While picking berries one day, a wortleberry sneaks into her mouth and impregnates her. Her parents threw her out as a whore when she enters labor. After giving birth, a sage pronounces her baby the next king, the pronunciation leading Väinämöinen into angry, self-imposed exile.

Irish legend CúChullain’s begetting was even more bizarre, with two failed virgin births seemingly mere precursors to his existence, which was brought about by normal means. While chasing a flock of birds intent on befouling the land, the mighty king Conchobor, his sister Deichtine and the men of Ulster came across the home of a pregnant woman and her husband. The men rested at the house as Deichtine aided the woman in her labor. Outside, a mare gave birth to twin foals. The next morning, the house, the birds, the couple and the mare were all gone; all that remained were the infant boy and the foals. Deichtine raised the boy as her own, but he died of an illness a couple of years later. Later, while lamenting the death of her foster-son, she drank a tiny creature in her water cup, which impregnated her. A man came to her in a dream and said he had put a child in her, and gave her instructions on how she should raise his

son. No one knew where the conception had come from, and some suspected Conchobor of sleeping with his sister. To put rumors aside, Conchobor betrothed Deichtine to Sualdam mac Roich while she was still pregnant. Deichtine was so ashamed to go to her marriage bed heavily pregnant that she got sick and vomited out the child. She entered mac Roich’s bed a virgin, and there conceived CúChullain.

The goddess Ceridwen concocted a potion of wisdom for her hideous son, assuming that the only way he could make it in the world was as a wise man. When it came time to give him the potion, the child Gwion stepped in front of her son and drank it, feeling the ugly boy didn’t deserve wisdom. Ceridwen was so angry with him that she pursued him in a shapeshifting game until he turned into a grain of wheat and she into a hen. She swallowed him, and nine months later, she gave birth to him as Taliesin, noted as the greatest and wisest bard of Wales.

In a very similar story, Inuit mythology has the trickster god Raven wishing to steal the sun. He changes himself into a pine needle and is swallowed by a maiden. Why the maiden was eating pine needles isn’t discussed, of course, and probably shouldn’t be questioned. Raven gestated inside her and was reborn nine months later. The demanding baby boy fussed so much that the family gave him the sun to play with and he steals it immediately.

These stories of parthenogenesis have two things in common: each woman gave birth to an extremely powerful man—sage, king, or god—and each pregnancy came about through the interference of a powerful being. It would take considerable meddling with destiny, physiology and possibly the cooperation of a spirit to impregnate a woman and set the destiny for the child these days. Virgin births bring about someone powerful, and you can use this device to make a chronicle interesting. Some possibilities are setting up a character’s history to include a virgin birth or even creating a situation where a spirit impregnates one of your unsuspecting player characters.

This will take a bit of planning, though, as bringing a powerful being into the world is intended to change it forever, and this is something big for the mages (and the Storyteller) to deal with. Not something you want to throw arbitrarily into a chronicle, but with good planning it can be intriguing.

The **Fatherless Birth** rote (not all such births are from virgins) allows a mage to attempt to manipulate such a destiny.

In today’s age, a **Minor Geas** can be used for anything as trivial as helping someone lose weight to forcing them to be polite in a tense diplomatic situation. A mage must always

had magical weight behind them, outweighing any and all personal morals. Bearers would often take the **Minor Geas** voluntarily, considering it a supplement to their already significant honor code.

take on a **Minor Geas** voluntarily, as the Effect is not strong enough to force a will upon someone.

System: Mind forces the target's honor code to be bound by rules he has agreed to follow. Entropy punishes any who break the *geas* with bad luck. Casting successes dictate not only how strong the compulsion is, but how badly things go for whoever breaks the *geas*. This rote is coincidental.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••.

SHAPECHANGE CURSE

[•••• LIFE, •••• MIND]

Worse than placing a binding Effect on someone, or forcing her will through a *geas*, is the horrible power of the forced shapechange. Several members of legendary Irish hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill's family were plagued with this curse: his sister and her sons, Bran and Sceolan, were cursed to be dogs, and Fionn's first wife, Sadb, was shapechanged into the form of a doe. Often, these legendary people could be freed only by the shaman who cursed them, or by one stronger than that shaman. (On the other hand, in Fionn's nephews' cases, not at all. Fionn kept them as his faithful hunting dogs.)

In a less malevolent usage of this Effect, it is said that the master shamans also used it on their initiates. The shapechange was meant to introduce the initiate to the power of the animal totems that he was expected to be intimately familiar with. The initiate would spend anywhere from a number of days to a full year in the shape, and the Effect was lifted when the master saw fit. The two Irish pig-keepers, Friuch and Rucht, were punished with the shapechange, where they were cursed to fight as birds, water creatures, stags, phantoms, dragons and maggots. They spent two years in each shape, and had no knowledge of who they were; they only had the desire to destroy each other.

System: Similar to the Life Effect **Animal Form**, the **Shapechange Curse** rote is more malevolent, for it uses the Mind Sphere to also exert control over the mind of the target. A successful casting of this spell turns the target into an animal form with the mind of an animal. Successes determine the length of time the target remains in the shape without control of his mind.

This rote is always *Vulgar*.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••, Trickster •••••.

SALMON OF WISDOM

[••• MIND, •• TIME, OPTIONAL •• SPIRIT]

Irish hero Fionn Mac Cumhaill was touted as one of the wisest men ever to live, and it was given that he tasted the salmon of wisdom (accidentally) to attain this power. The salmon themselves were reputed to live below a hazelnut tree. Legend has it that the magic came from the hazelnuts themselves, which the salmon would eat. The tree, the spring, and the salmon are presumably still in the Umbra, although no one knows just where. While the salmon of wisdom seem to be more legend than fact today, a mage can call on their wisdom to gain experience prophetic vision.

The mage enters a short, dreamlike trance that reveals a portion of the future, although usually in highly metaphorical rather than exact images. Properly interpreting the beings one meets and the places one visits is the true art of prophecy.

System: Mind is used to empower the mage to experience the trance without losing consciousness or forgetting what occurs, and Time brings forth the shadows of the future. Optionally, the Spirit Sphere can actually allow the shaman to communicate with the salmon themselves, and they will appear in the trance, pointing out important aspects of it either physically or through spirit speech.

The more successes the mage rolls, the more vivid the scene that is evoked. One success may reveal a misty, horizonless place where a few figures interact confusingly — interpreting the figures' identities and actions is the key. Three or more successes might evoke a mythic forest with a staggeringly old hazelnut tree, the pool beneath it full of salmon ready to speak to the shaman. Five successes may reveal more than metaphor — actual people the shaman knows or will soon encounter may appear.

Proper interpretation of events is best done through roleplaying, but an Intelligence + Engimas roll may prompt the Storyteller for more clues. This rote is coincidental, since only the tranced-out shaman experiences the prophecy.

Spirit-Talker: Wise One ••••.

WARP-SPASM

[••• FORCES, •••• LIFE, ••• PRIME]

CúChullain's most powerful battle Effect was his **Warp-Spasm**. He was described as physically altering his shape to manifest into a horrible being, with swollen limbs, bulging eyes, and an incredible heat coming off his body.

The **Warp-Spasm** is an incredibly powerful aid to any mage who wishes to increase his battle powers. The Effect physically alters the mage, making him a fury-filled warrior. His body temperature will rise, causing additional damage to any who touches him.

System: Life and Prime orchestrate the initial transformation from mild-mannered mage to hideous warrior. Forces cause the mage's body to heat to a level unbearable to anyone surrounding him. Successes determine how long the **Warp-Spasm** lasts.

A mage experiencing a **Warp-Spasm** gets one extra dot to all Physical Attributes for every two successes gained. In addition, he delivers two extra dice of damage due to the extreme heat he gives off. Extra successes can be applied to duration, but should the **Warp-Spasm** last for more than a scene, the character must spend a point of Willpower each extra duration to retain his sanity — if he doesn't, he becomes a mindless berserker.

This rote is *very Vulgar*.

Old Faith: Summer ••••.

Spirit-Talker: Warrior ••••.



IRISH WONDERS HAZELNUTS OF WISDOM

Level 2 Charm

Hazelnuts were considered sacred to the ancients: Fionn Mac Cumhaill and others in Celtic legend sought great wisdom from the fruit of nine sacred hazelnut trees that overhung a pool. Fionn tasted a small bit of a salmon that had eaten the hazelnuts that fell into the pool and was said to have attained his great wisdom from that one taste. King Cormac also encountered a pool such as this during his trip to the Land of Promise.

Hazelnuts of Wisdom are items that can be used as foci, or even eaten for magical effect, if properly harvested. To get the nuts, however, one must find their tree in the Umbra. The location of said tree has been lost for some time, and a questing mage would have to do much research and inquire from many spirits to figure out where it is.

[If used as a focus, a hazelnut can give the mage a +1 bonus to Wits dice pools, as the wisdom from the nut sharpens the mage's cunning faculties. If ingested, the hazelnut will

give the mage a temporary +2 bonus to his Wits score; this effect lasts for one scene.]

SPEAR OF GOBHNIU

Level 4 Artifact

The spear was a sacred artifact to Celtic shamans, and this weapon permeated many of those legends. Both Fionn mac Cumhaill and CúChullain used mighty spears, either imbued with magic or forged to be wicked in battle.

Gobhniu (the Irish god of smithing) was said to forge spears that never missed their mark. He forged many that heroes carried in legendary battles (and later used as honorary places to perch the heads of fallen heroes and foes). They are now in old weapons collections and museums; some may be buried under the mysterious mounds or standing stones (like Stonehenge), or otherwise hidden.

[A mage who manages to possess one of Gobhniu's spears possesses a powerful (if obvious and slightly Vulgar) weapon. It provides a +2 bonus to attack dice pools, and does aggravated damage to a target's Pattern as well as body.]

THE BLACK SOW: BRITAIN



Behavior that's admired is the path to power among people everywhere.

— Beowulf (Seamus Heaney translation)

Mystery shrouds a great deal of Britain's shamanistic past. The northern lands (Scotland of today) had the Picts, a group whose history is lost to us for the most part. The middle and the south hold the unexplainable mystery of the large earthen mounds and the standing stones, such as Stonehenge and Avebury. The legends of the great warrior Beowulf, as well as Bran of Wales and Taliesin the bard, also stem from these regions, along with the tales of the great Black Sow of Wales.

THE PICTS

We honestly know very little about the Picts. Most of the history we have obtained about them is second-hand: Roman tales of barbarian warriors living in the northern lands of Britain (currently Scotland), and Celtic lore describing the clans of the north as being enemies of the Romans. It is not known where the warriors came from; some assume Ireland, some assume Finland or Russia, Spain or France, others assume they were pre-Celts.

What we do know of these mysterious people is their genealogy of kings, which followed an odd matriarchal line. Historians theorize that Pict warriors settled in northern Britain, and that no women settled with them. The men supposedly made a bargain with the Irish: they would send over women to marry the Picts, and the Picts would have their kings follow the line of the mother. So the men ruled as kings, but the king's sister would give birth to the next in line for the throne. This theory might explain why Irish words entered the Pictish vocabulary.

The Picts were never conquered, and thus boasted of legendary kings: King Cruithne was said to reign for 100 years, and split the land up between his seven sons. Legends say that King Durst fought and won 100 battles. These kings were possibly involved with causing the Romans to admit that Northern Britain just wasn't worth the lives they were spending on it. Even Saint Columba feared that the northern barbarians' magic (he called them "Druids") was stronger than his holy power given from God.

One of the few things we know about the Picts is their skill in building the great standing stones scattered in Northern Britain. They carved mysterious information on them, much of which is lost to us now. Early stones have animals and geometric designs on them, thought to be family coats of arms,



gravestones for kings, territorial markers or commemorations of the dead. On the other hand, they may simply have been art.

Modern mages may discover the symbols as dedications to animal totems. Fishes, horses, boars, bulls, eagles, and an odd animal called the "Pictish Elephant" show up frequently.

Romans also described Picts as being heavily tattooed with their totem animals. The boar was their mother-goddess figure, and they would tattoo her onto their bodies for protection.

THE BLACK SOW OF BRITAIN

The black sow was renowned throughout Wales and Britain as a fearsome figure, one who travels the night (usually Hallowe'en or Samhain), destroying the profane body of any human it catches in order to rebuild it as a sacred vessel filled with spirit power. The sow had no tail, and was called, in Welsh, *yr Hwch Ddu Gwta*. She would sometimes be seen with a headless woman dressed in white.

The sow possibly has some connection with Cerridwen, a triple goddess figure associated with the sow and considered a fertility goddess. This connects with the view of the Black Sow as a symbol for spiritual rebirth.

Today's consideration has changed the myth to make the Black Sow an evil figure, a symbol of cold death. Most have forgotten the image of rebirth that goes along with it, and the shamanistic power of this animal is all but lost.

BEOWULF

Time to remember the tales read in 6th grade. Beowulf is perhaps the oldest written Anglo-Saxon story on record, and chronicles the mighty deeds of one warrior. A story from Britain, it chronicles the tales of a Scandinavian warrior, Beowulf, and his many triumphs over monsters threatening the land of his friends and those of his homeland.

Beowulf's most famous battle is his first: the one against Grendel, a fearsome monster who attacks the Danes for years on end before Beowulf arrives and slays him barehanded. After a night of celebration, they are shocked to discover the attack of Grendel's mother. Beowulf takes up his enchanted sword, Hrunting, and, with more difficulty, slays her — after Hrunting fails him for the first time ever.

Beowulf settles into kingship and rules comfortably for 50 years. A clumsy treasure-seeking adventurer then stumbles across the hoard of a dragon and enrages the beast. Beowulf must fight again, although he feels confrontation this may be his last. When all of his men desert him but one, he slays the dragon with a dagger after taking a mortal wound. He orders the colossal treasure to be released from the dragon's hoard. The treasure was buried with him in a massive mound on the coast, and it supposedly remains there to this day.

THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH SHAMAN

Little is known of Pictish magic, but evidence from the standing stones and written records show that they were

heavily into animism and totem worship. The shaman would use the tattoos of animals to infuse the body with the power of the totem animal, such as the mother goddess figure of the boar. The black sow totem was also heavily worshipped throughout Britain, and shamans would tap into her power for rebirthing rituals. These histories and myths show how important the animal totems were to the British people, and how they relied on the shamans to represent and contact the animal spirits.

Beowulf was a warrior shaman figure like Fionn and CúChullain, and, like them, was also revered for his wisdom. He had the power to enter the shamanic ecstasy trances to defeat his foes: the powerful monsters that ravaged the countryside.

British myths and legends are consistent with the power of the legendary shamans. The Picts and the Britons established connections with the power of the animal totems, and the myths of Beowulf established the power of the shamanic trances as used in battle.

BRITISH ROTES

WATCHDOG [• • • MATTER, • • PRIME]

While the meanings behind the many standing stones in Britain still elude the Awakened and the non-Awakened alike, some mages have surmised that some stones were used as guardians. There have been several stones found toppled to the ground, covering hapless skeletons. There are also many old stories of Christian invaders instructing men to tear down the heathen stones, only to quickly reverse the order after losing several warriors to the toppling behemoths. They ordered no Christians to touch the bewitched stones, believing that the heathens had imbued too much of their power within them to be safe.

Similar to setting a Ward on an area, this Effect will imbue an item, be it a standing stone or a kitchen chopping block, with enough energy to act as guardian. While the item will have no intelligence, it will be ensorcelled to damage anyone tampering with it.

System: The mage uses Matter and Prime to set the trigger for this Effect, manipulating the Pattern of the target object and channeling it with Quintessence. The trigger and desired effect must be stated at the casting, whether it be a car rolling over someone who gets too close to it, to a kitchen knife chasing someone who tries to open a drawer. The number of successes dictate how long the item will attack once triggered. The Effect remains on the object until triggered, after which it must be recast. Botches might cause the mage to think the object is enchanted while it remains completely normal.

This rote is coincidental as long as the effect can be explained away as such — rocks or cars "accidentally" rolling over someone are coincidental, while knives chasing people are quite Vulgar.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••, Wise One ••.



BRITISH WONDERS

HRUNTING

Level 4 Unique Artifact

While Beowulf dispatched Grendel with his mighty bare hands, he did attempt to use his magical sword Hrunting in his battle against the foul beast who mothered Grendel. In his time of need, though, the sword failed him and refused to sink into her hide, and he tossed it aside.

Hrunting was abandoned in that underwater grave of Grendel and his mother. Where it has ended up now is anyone's guess — it could still be there. Legend has it that it was tempered in blood, called upon often to perform heroic feats, and always struck true. While the sword proved useless in the hands of the great warrior Beowulf, it could serve another much better. As Beowulf learned in his final battle against the dragon, he was simply too strong to wield weapons — they would break or fail in his strong grasp.

Hrunting will serve its master well and usually strike true (+3 bonus to attack dice pools). There is a risk of it failing its master at a time of need, though. Being of a magical origin, it can do aggravated damage to the target's Pattern as well as body.

PROPHETIC SKULL

Level 2 Artifact

As seen by the sacred magic coming from the head of Bran, the shamans of Europe held the head of fallen foes and friends as high trophies. Many sanctuaries in Gaul had pillars set to hold the heads of slain enemies. A large eagle gargoyle guarded the heads, which were said to be able to divine the future if asked yes/no questions. Many of the skulls have gone missing since their heyday atop the pillars, but they still exist. Most are used as divining tools, residing in boxes that are held in the hands when a question is asked.

There is a possibility that all heads are not alike. A head can get a sense of a mage's intent and may have a mind of its own, so to speak. If the mage's personality and intent matches the personality of the fallen warrior, it is more likely to give reliable answers.

A "yes" answer is indicated by the box becoming lighter, while a "no" answer causes the box to become very heavy. The skull must remain in the box to have any powers.

[The heads have the equivalent prophecy powers of the **Divinations** Time Effect (*Mage* revised, p. 192).]

THE WOLF: FINLAND



*Now in the ninth year, in the tenth summer
she raised her head from the sea, lifts up the crown
of her head.*

*She began to perform her acts of creation, to
accomplish her works
on the wide expanse of the sea, on the wide open sea.*

— Elias Lönnrot, *Kalevala* (1: 269 – 272)

The official epic history of Finland is the *Kalevala*, 50 epic poems describing the exploits of many Finnish heroes, foremost among them the sage Väinämöinen. The Finns had a rich mythology, describing everything from the origin of the world to the theft of the sun and moon.

Shamans of the time primarily weaved their power through song, using this manifestation of power to travel to the Umbra, heal wounds, and even stop dogs from barking. The wolf, the cunning animal representing strength and intelligence, is a fitting totem to represent Väinämöinen and his country.

THE KALEVALA

The 50 poems of the *Kalevala* were comprised largely from oral history from the rural areas of Finland and Russia, collected by Elias Lönnrot. After it was written down, the Finns adopted it as their national epic. While the poems tell many tales, from the creation of the world to the follies of proud men, the majority of the poems tell of the cunning hero Väinämöinen.

Born of the virgin air spirit Ilmatar, Väinämöinen is the wisest man ever to grace the land of Finland. He is kind, gracious, daring, and has powerful magic within his music. Most of his stories are centered on his dealings with the land of Pohjola, and his desire to wed a daughter of the North Farm. He offers her mother, Louhi, the Sampo, a mill that will bring forth an unending supply of food, salt and money, for the hand of her daughter. The mother agrees, and Väinämöinen asks his smith Ilmarinen to make the Sampo, who does so unwillingly. The question of who has earned the hand of the daughter of Louhi becomes an issue, as the girl herself promises to wed Ilmarinen even though Väinämöinen woos her.

The confused love lives of the warriors escalate with the jealousy of Väinämöinen, the death of Ilmarinen's wife, his forging of a cold, golden woman, and his stealing of another one of Louhi's daughters (and subsequent forced shapeshifting of her into a seagull). These broken hearts lead Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen to decide that Pohjola doesn't deserve the wealth of the Sampo, and they seek to steal it. During the final fight with Louhi, who attacks in eagle form, the Sampo is destroyed. The heroes fight Louhi over the sun and moon, which she has hidden, and when Ilmarinen starts to forge a new sun and moon, she releases them.

The epic ends with the coming of a new King of Karelia, a virgin birth, and the self-exile by a disgusted Väinämöinen, predicting he will be called upon again to aid Finland and to construct a new Sampo for the people.

Väinämöinen uses his magic to cure the sick and slay spirit beasts set against him by his enemies. He binds his enemies or shapechanges them. The magic of the land of Finland is represented by this cunning old man, and a mage would do well to study him and his techniques. The magic of the smith Ilmarinen is also fascinating, as he created the Sampo itself, the golden wife, and many magical instruments.

THE ROLE OF THE SMITH

Although smiths were not considered shamans, they did possess magic of their own. Finnish smith Ilmarinen's skill was considerable enough to create the magical unique Sampo, forge a wife of gold, and construct a replacement for the sun and moon. Other myths say that smiths also had the power to heal and see into the future. They were also able to drive away hostile spirits with the heat and noise of working with the fires. This was considered a valuable asset, as evil spirits were often drawn to their power over fire. Some say that evil spirits gave the smith his power in the first place, and would therefore constantly annoy them.

Some even considered smiths to have the power to temper shaman's souls with their fires, allowing them to pass to the Otherworld more easily. In turn, shamans could cure a smith's sickness brought about by evil spirits. They would hold a ritual to anoint the smith's tools with bull's blood, tossing a bull's head on the fire, and then the shaman would host a spirit who would speak through the shaman and answer questions regarding the treatments the smith should receive.

THE ROLE OF THE BARDIC SHAMAN

Finnish shamans used their magic to manipulate spirits, enter the Otherworld, channel power over others and even shapechange. The epics that retain these stories describe the magic in detail, allowing today's mages to study the Effects and purposes of those powerful shamans.

Contact and control over spirits and their world, and channeling power through music and trances embodies much of the shamanistic flavor of Finnish magic.

FINNISH ROTES

BINDING SONG

[•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• TIME]

Carving the holy stone

Cast the lucky dice far

Reading the runes that are thrown

You will stay where you are

The Finnish sagas of the Kalevala incorporate the lost art of song magic, giving the singer a powerful tool to create many different Effects. The binding song was a unique one, allowing the singer to stop someone else in his or her tracks.

System: The song incorporates Correspondence and Time to halt the person in space and time. They will have recognition of what is going on around them, and may even be able to speak, if the singer wishes it. The number of successes dictates how long the target remains held. This rote is Vulgar.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••.

ENTER THE SAUNA [•• SPIRIT]

The sauna was a sacred place to the Finnish shamans; while the sauna was a popular place for people to visit, the shamans understood that there was one day a year set aside for the spirits to use the sauna. Humans would do well not to visit the sauna on that day. However, shamans would sit outside the sauna in a trance and ask questions of the spirits and discern the answers by interpreting the physical sensations that came over them in their trance.

Today's mage can use the same systems, a meditative trance, to reach out to the spirits, and ask certain questions for simple answers. Cult of Ecstasy practitioners may wish to replicate the sauna trance for the full effect, while Spirit Talkers may just want to meditate. Regardless, if the divining spirit is contacted, it will respond by the same methods as the Finns experienced — a “no” answer is indicated by scratching, and “yes” by gentle pricking of the skin.

System: The mage may ask one yes/no question per success. Note that the spirit questioned may not know the answer, or may think it knows the answer and thereby give the wrong answer. This rote is coincidental.

Spirit-Talker: Wise One ••.

EXORCISM SONG [•••• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

As a rabbit lies safe in her burrow

As a hawk is at home in the sky

As a fish rests deep in the sea

A spirit has its place by the by

Possession by spirits and other creatures from the Umbra is a fearful thing to deal with, which is why the **Exorcism Song** was created. This enchanting and misleadingly soothing song contains strong magic to force out from a host any unwanted Umbral spirit. Exorcism takes a finely tuned mind and this long song takes a good bit of discipline and concentration, not

to mention being ready in case the spirit or demon decides to attack the mage after being forced from its host.

System: Mind and Spirit magic is used to coerce the spirit, allowing the mage to force it to quit an unwanted possession. One success causes the spirit to leave the body it possesses, but it does not have to leave the area, and may try to possess another person there (it cannot attempt to repossess the same person for at least 24 hours). Three or more successes cause it to leave the area. Scoring five or more successes causes it to lose its current ephemeral body and reform elsewhere in the Umbra, unless it spends one point of Power, in which case it must simply leave.

This rote is coincidental, since most people are incapable of seeing spirits and will believe the ceremony to be mainly psychological in effect.

Spirit-Talker: Chieftain ••••, Wise One ••.

PROTECTION SONG [•• CORRESPONDENCE, •• FORCES, OPTIONAL •• SPIRIT]

The monsters in the dark won't harm you

The terrors of the dark can't make you flee

While the ghouls chomp the bones and sinew

You are safe here, and safe with me

When you were a child and frightened of the dark, your grandmother told you that singing a little song might make you feel braver, didn't she? She didn't know how right she was. Sometimes when there are threats all around, and one is alone and frightened, the best thing to do is to tap into the power of Finnish song magic and weave a protection song. The mage singing the protection song surrounds herself with a magical field that cannot be breached by ordinary weapons or low-level offensive Effects. She will also be hidden from scrying Effects. The downside to this Effect is that the mage herself cannot attack, as the force field goes both ways.

System: This combines the effects of a **Ward** (Mage, p. 159), and **Energy Shield** (p. 166), creating a barrier protecting the mage from physical and energetic harm. Magical weapons and high-level Effects can shred this protection, but it is still quite useful if one has found oneself separated from a group, lost in hostile territory or injured and in a bad situation. An optional version uses Spirit to add a spirit ward, keeping spirits at bay. This rote is usually coincidental, unless there is no means to explain away its effects.

Spirit-Talker: Warrior •••, Wise One •••.

FINNISH WONDERS SAMPO FRAGMENTS

Level 2 Artifact

The shaman Väinämöinen had the smith Ilmarinen make a Sampo for the mistress of Pohjola in return for his passage home and the mistress's daughter's hand in marriage. The Sampo was a three-sided mill, each side created to grind out an unlimited supply of grain, salt and money. The mistress

set the Sampo in a cave to churn out riches for the land. When the youngest daughter spurned not only Väinämöinen but also Ilmarinen, the men set off to steal the Sampo back from Pohjola. As they fled in their ship, the mistress of Pohjola pursued the men in the form of a giant hawk, and the Sampo was smashed in the battle and fell into the sea.

Some say that several pieces of the artifact washed up on the shores of Finland, giving the country great wealth and prosperity. Many pieces are said to remain in the sea.

The pieces of the Sampo look like brightly colored pottery with a frame of iron. A mage who comes into possession of a fragment will find he has increased luck, monetary

gain, and, if a situation comes up where he is without food, he will have very little trouble finding any. A useful tool to help things fall in his favor, the Sampo fragment is still not very powerful as a focus. It's better as a good luck charm.

The Storyteller determines the game outcomes of the Sampo fragments. The Storyteller can choose to have the character find something she's looking for, or have a check for an Ability go her way once in a while. Luck is fickle, and the mage may carry the Sampo fragment and not have any luck for the entire duration of a confrontation with an enemy, and then end up finding a \$50 bill on the ground as she stumbles home.

THE EAGLE: GERMANIC TRIBES



*Three doves take counsel,
Take counsel as how to create the world.
"Let us plunge to the bottom of the sea.
Let us gather fine sand;
Let us scatter fine sand,
That it may become for us black earth.
Let us get golden rocks;
Let us scatter golden rocks.

Let there be for us a bright sky,
A bright sky, a shining sun,
A shining sun and bright moon,
A bright moon, a bright morning star,
A bright morning star and little starlets.*

— Mykhailo Petrovych Drahomaniv, Old Russian Christmas Carol

GERMANIC TRIBES

The Germanic peoples are difficult to track in early histories, as they did not define their world by natural frontiers or national borders. The tribes moved freely around much of Europe, mingling with the Norse, the Slavs, the Frankish people and even the early Celts.

When the Holy Roman Empire encompassed the Germanic lands, many of the people were Christianized, but some shamans still practiced as late as the 19th century in some smaller towns. There is evidence of shamans practicing their spiritual magic even before modern Wiccans and Druids built their shrines to the Great Mother Goddess and the Horned God.

Legend has it that magic first came to these people when a woman was gathering mushrooms. A sudden rainstorm came upon her, and she ran beneath a tree, removing her clothes and bundling them up so they would not get wet. After the storm passed, she dressed and returned to her gathering. A god came across her and wanted to know what magic she had used to remain dry in the storm. She agreed to tell him, provided he agreed to tell her all of his magic secrets. He revealed all, and was understandably quite angry when he

realized he'd been tricked. But the damage had been done, and the first Slav had Awakened.

The Germanic shamans focused on death and rebirth, using their animal totems to guide them into spiritual death, leading them to the Umbra, and trusting them to bring them back for spiritual rebirth. The shamans put animals in high regard, and considered them manifestations of their gods, beings closer to the spirit world than mere humans.

The people of the Polish and western Russian towns often respected their resident sorcerer, the man they called the *koldun* (women were *koldun'ia*). They were important figures in these small towns in medieval and post-medieval times, and were sought after for healing charms and blessings of fields. The *kolduny* were poor and landless, their only "possession" being their magical and herbal knowledge. They bargained this power with the townsfolk to manage their modest lifestyles, and received honored guest status at many events and dinners. One of their main social duties was to honor weddings with their attendance.

While they did sell themselves as healers and prophets, some of the most common magic the *kolduny* performed was either the spoiling curse or protection from another shaman's curse. People feared their tempers, and if a *koldun* was slighted or insulted, he often would cast the spoiling curse on his offenders. This Effect was mischievous in nature: ruining crops, causing calves to be born with two heads, or cursing a happy couple's wedding day.

The *kolduny* became scarce in later days when the peasants got braver and would blame any bad thing that happened to them on these sorcerers. Many of these shamans were beaten or killed by angry mobs, whether they had anything to do with the misfortune or not.

The medieval Slavic peoples also worshipped animal totems. They felt it taboo to slay a totem animal (except in religious ceremonies), believing that each person had an animal twin, and if that twin was slain, then the person would die as well.

ROLE OF THE GERMANIC SHAMAN

The Germanic shamans are perhaps the closest to the core definition of “shaman” of all the Europeans considered here. Taking their role of psychopomp seriously, the shamans mapped out the Umbra and various ways to travel there. The *kolduny* took on the social responsibility of medicine man and honored elder of the village when they would heal the populace and bless — or curse — weddings.

By studying their histories and applying them to today's magic, a mage can learn more about the Umbra, spirit guides and the totems — especially the Eagle, the guise in which shamans can pass through to the Umbra. Today's mages may also discover that the old gods are not dead. They are merely waiting for their time to come again.

GERMANIC ROTES

EAGLE FORM [•••• MIND, •• SPIRIT]

Some warrior shamans will use animal forms to aid them in battle, but the spirit guides also had a favorite animal shape to take. The sages would shapeshift their astral forms to facilitate their trips to the Umbra, slipping effortlessly through the worlds in the astral guise of an eagle. The mage who masters this rote has easier passage through Umbral pericarps — the Gauntlet between Umbral realms.

System: This is a modified form of **Astral Projection** (*Mage*, p. pp. 178-179) where the mage calls upon the power of Eagle and assumes his shape. This allows him greater ease when passing any Gauntlet or Umbral barrier: each success on the rote casting subtracts one from the Gauntlet level for that mage. If this reduces the Gauntlet below one, then the barrier does not exist for that mage. This rote is coincidental.

Spirit-Talker: Trickster •••••, Wise One •••.

SPOLIING [•• ENTRÓPY, •• LIFE]

While the *kolduny*, the shamans of Eastern Europe, were considered respected members of society in the towns that they served, they are also well known for the mischief they caused when they were displeased. Unfairly or not, they often showed their displeasure with the Sleepers they aided by spoiling. People considered it a very bad idea to not invite the *koldun* to a wedding, because they would react to the insult by showing up anyway and cursing the happy couple (or the negligent parents) with anything from crop failure to sick livestock to a lack of children in the marriage.

The use of such magic today may seem archaic when there are so many other Effects to cast on a rival or enemy, but it is amazing how much one small curse can disrupt another's life. Cursing an enemy with fumbling fingers so that they drop foci, mishandle components, or simply trip while trying to run can be more effective and frustrating than causing physical damage.



The emotional damage of suddenly being unable to do what has come so naturally for years can have impressive effects.

System: Entropy is used to bring bad luck to the target while Life alters their crops, cattle or chickens. This rote is coincidental; there are usually a lot of rational explanations for such bad luck.

Spirit-Talker: Trickster ••••.

WOLF FORM [•••• LIFE, •• MIND]

Germanic shamans had many uses for the shapechange beyond simply shifting into an animal's shape. Leaving the air to their more spiritually minded brethren, the warriors preferred to take the shape of earth-bound creatures built for battle, such as the wolf. They were stronger in battle because of it, taking the innate power of the creature.

In the warrior-shaman initiation and in general practice, the shaman would actually lose herself in the shapechange, allowing her mind to be taken over by the animal form, to have a better understanding of the totem and the way to use its gifts.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

While we do attempt to be as historically accurate as possible, some mysteries in this world are simply unanswered, and will probably remain so forever. No one is sure who built Stonehenge — for that matter, many of the mounds and standing stones of the British Isles lack any clue as to who created them—or why they were built. The rumors range from African giants carrying the stones to Ireland and building it there (only to have it dismantled and moved to England by Merlin), to thousands of early Celt and Pictish slaves. No one knows for sure.

Speaking of the Picts, they're another mystery. These people from northern Britain (now Scotland) left almost nothing behind to tell us about their lifestyle. Historians have speculated about their language, their standing stones, their practices, and still almost nothing is agreed upon. Were they from Russia? Ireland? Gaul? Finland? Several signs point in different directions.

To speculate correctly about these issues would require us to have more archeological information than all archaeologists and historians out there. So we do what we can.

When dealing with ancient magic, practices and beliefs, we use what historical information we have, and then take it in the direction that fits the fictional world. As we remind you often, this is a game, and what is written here may eventually part from reality. This is a work of fiction, and artistic license was taken, guesses were made and rules were created for the game. Just as you can accept the make-believe Verbena and Sons of Ether, you can surely accept the magical theories of the shamans' mysteries.

Work with us here.

System: Life magic is used to assume the shape of a wolf (as in the *Mutate Form* Effect, *Mage* revised, p. 171), but Mind is used to retain human consciousness. This rote is Vulgar.

Spirit-Talker: Trickster •••••.

WHY DIDN'T YOU GO INTO...?

The phrase "European Shamanism" is a rather large category that encompasses many separate cultures. We cover several in this chapter, but because of inevitable space restrictions, we had to leave some out. If you have a love of a certain flavor of shamanism and want to incorporate other myths, epics or magic into your chronicle, don't let the limitations of this chapter stop you. Here is a list of other venues to study if you want to delve further into mythic European shamanism:

Oisin, Fionn mac Cumhaill's son, made a name for himself apart from his famous father. He was a bard of some renown — it's said he penned most of the legends about Fionn—and was approached by Niamh, a nymph, who invited him to Tir Nan Og. He remained with her for 300 years as her lover, and had many adventures, rescuing maidens and defeating demons. He returned to Ireland when he became homesick. Niamh warned him not to leave the back of his steed and touch the ground, but he fell from his horse and was transformed into an old, blind man. He sank into a depression when he discovered the state of the country since his father's influence had departed, and refused to follow St. Patrick into Christianity because he couldn't follow a god who didn't recognize Fionn's power.

Mad Sweeny was an Ulster king who offended the wrong person and was shapechanged into a bird for punishment, doomed to spend the rest of his life bitterly looking for solace. He flitted from tree to tree, condemning all humans who cut his boughs away, took his food, or led generally happy lives while he was so miserable. He spent his time lamenting his pain in verse. His tale is told in the poem *Sweeny Astray*.

Berserkerang was part of the European shaman's bag of tricks, especially those shamans dabbling in the arts of the warrior. These warrior-mages would lose sense of all but the fight, taking hold of an animal spirit — usually Bear or Wolf — and using it to fight wildly. *Beowulf* is commonly thought to have summoned berserker strength to beat the demon Grendel barehanded, for instance.

The Mabinogi was a collection of Welsh adventures consisting of four tales about Pwyll, Prince of Dyfed, Branwen, daughter of Llyr, Manawydan, son of Llyr, and Math son of Mathonwy. These epics are full of shapechanging initiation rituals and mysterious weapons, and are worth perusal.

GERMANIC WONDERS

SACRED BULL HIDE

Level 2 Artifact

The bull was often seen as a symbol for strength and power, but the hide of one was also used as a divination tool. Shamans would eat the raw flesh of the bull, drink its blood and sleep under the hides of these sacred totem animals.

While sleeping, the shaman would have a dream and receive inspiration or have a question answered. The hides were well preserved, and a few have even lasted until today. They were perhaps passed down through families — they may even be owned by those who do not know their power. Sleeping underneath one may give a mage a peek into the future, but like all divining tools and Effects, she may not be able to figure out what the dream means before it's too late.

TODAY'S MAGES AND YESTERDAY'S SHAMANS



Each dream finds at last its form; there is a drink for every thirst, and love for every heart. And there is no better way to spend your life than in the unceasing preoccupation of an idea — of an ideal.

—Gustave Flaubert, Correspondence (vol. 1, letter, Jan. 14, 1857, to Elisa Schlesinger)

When looking at the history of the continent of Europe during the time shamanism was widely practiced — which could be said to stretch from the time before Christ to around the time of the late dark ages — one must infer history from epic stories and poems of the time. Much history and knowledge was lost as Christianity swept up through Europe, destroying the “heathens,” burning their recorded past and driving their oral traditions underground.

Luckily, such stories and poems do exist, and much of the magic of the time is recorded in such writings. Stories and poetry inform us of this bloody and magical era, and illustrate how some shamans of the past used their magic.

Any power-hungry mage would want to scour European histories for hints of the magic of ancient shamans. They commanded powers from shapechanging to powerful divination techniques. A shaman could put a *geas* on his enemy or simply curse his enemy's spouse to become impotent. The sorcerers, shamans and wise men of the time were revered, honored, and feared by the populace, and epics were written about their glories. Such epic power can be tapped again by today's mage.

One of the strongest reasons to look to Europe for their dead magic is to learn their techniques to traverse the Gauntlet. Granted, the Gauntlet wasn't as formidable 2000 years ago, or even 1000 years ago (however, Väinämöinen would describe the Gauntlet as traveling along a bridge made of knives and swords), but the techniques used by the shamans could possibly be used today to make travel to the Umbra a little easier.

While Dreamspeakers of today consider the price paid to travel the Gauntlet worthwhile to spend, the shamans of older times used Effects specifically tailored to make the trip less painful. The goal of reaching the Otherworld was the point, not the pain inflicted along the way, which is ironic considering that the pain the shamans of old would have experienced would have been nothing compared to the Gauntlet and Avatar Storm today's mages must navigate.

The Effects used to travel to the Otherworld varied throughout Europe, but it seems each area had a technique for it. The Germanic tribes found that shapeshifting into an eagle's form would lead them through the veil between the worlds easier. Birds, particularly eagles, were seen as representing prophetic knowledge and skill, and seen as a link between the Umbra and the physical world. Taking on the shape of an eagle (either in physical form or astrally) made the trip easier for some shamans. Some Welsh warriors found that the head of Bran, one of their greatest warriors, slipped them easily from this world to the Umbra. The Finns had a song for just about everything, from binding a wound to stopping a dog from barking. They preferred to feed their magic into their musical instruments for the charms they sang. Väinämöinen had a magical harp he used to accompany his songs. In addition, the Irish bard Oisin, Fionn mac Cumhaill's son, discovered that nymphs (namely Niamh) could make the trip more pleasant for them — although returning had a price.

CHRONICLE NOTES

*Often, for undaunted courage,
fate spares the man it has not already marked.*

—Beowulf (572 – 3, Seamus Heaney translation)

Now that you've read all about the epics in which much of this old magic is chronicled, it's time to fit the shamanistic magic into your own epic chronicle. Your mages will be discovering powerful Wonders and finding ways to translate old magic into the known Spheres, and as Storyteller, you will have to orchestrate their travels.

The mere act of uncovering and learning how to use the buried information can fuel a chronicle for some time. The magic is not simply there for the taking; it's been covered for hundreds — some of it for thousands — of years, and it's unlikely it will make itself known just because your mages ask it to. Finding the old magic of the Celts and the Germanic tribes is not a simple issue. It is not as easy as just singing a song out of the *Kalevala*. It was the mindset of the ancient shamans, the way they thought and the intent they had as they manipulated the animal totems and traversed the Gauntlet that allowed them to master the Effects they did. Today's mage has to be in tune with that.

PRACTICAL USE BY TODAY'S MAGE

Weaving the discovery of shamanistic magic and Wonders into a chronicle should be relatively simple for Storytellers to do. The chronicle should include some time spent searching for, stumbling across, or studying and learning of the ancient magic. There are a number of ways to put your mages in the way of information and items. Here are but a few examples:

- Ancient letters and books: In all the old writings of many of the Traditions, there must be some moldy tomes of forgotten lore and magic written from days gone by. The discovery of these tomes will be step one — then the mages in question will have to spend some time reverse-engineering these writings into the Sphere magic of today. They might also describe a magical item or two hidden in the countryside, and what may be guarding them....

- Experimentation: The *Kalevala* and many of the Irish epics describe how a shaman would perform magic in more detail than most myths. A mage could study these epics and attempt the same effects using the power at hand. However, this is dangerous and could end disastrously. A mage would have to be brilliant or insane to attempt it. One cannot just sing a song out of the *Kalevala* and expect it to work; there is much lost in the very mindset of this dead magic that must be recovered before the Effects are mastered again.

- Old hermit in the cottage: Are you sure all of the old magic is lost? We know there are mages that do not follow the Traditions and prefer to follow the old ways — and we're not talking about the weird Hollow Ones either. Surely there's someone out there who still knows trick or two of the ancients, and wishes to find an apprentice to pass it on to?

- Time magic: Cultists of Ecstasy and other users of Time may scoff at all of this research. Why look it up when you can just take a peek back and see how it was all done? The Masters of Time magic have the power of time travel, and if they want to risk the dangers of extreme Paradox and the possibility of forcing themselves into a different timeline, they can attempt to discover the secrets of the shamans with the magic they command today.

- Spirit help: It's the magic of the shamans that the mages are searching for; one obvious place to look would be to the spirits themselves. Contacting an old spirit and convincing it to help in searching for and learning the ways of the old shamans would be a good place to start. This, of course, implies that the spirit in question will be able or willing to help.

- Local flavor: The wisdom and myths of small communities die slowly, and yet today's short-attention-span world largely ignores them and their stories. Sniffing around small villages may reward mages with some legends of *kolduny* of old, rumors of what is buried underneath the standing stone down the road, or tales of a monster that still lives and guards a treasure bigger than Beowulf's.

- Avatars and reincarnation: In rare circumstances, a mage may find herself connected to her past self — a Finnish shaman or Irish warrior — in the guise of her Avatar. The past

not-quite-so-Vulgar way will come up empty handed. The universe still notices when something is happening that shouldn't be, and won't stop to consider whether it's a classic Effect from the good old days or not. Paradox is still doled out with regard to the usual rules.

However, one thing the European shamans do give us are several tools for divination. Fionn mac Cumhaill ate the salmon of wisdom, the Welsh spoke to the head of Bran, and

STORYTELLER'S NOTE: BOB MASTERS THE SALMON-LEAP

Let's say your player, Bob, wants his mage to attempt CúChullain's salmon-leap. We have no officially written note for that. He thinks he has researched his myths and Irish folklore enough to have an idea. You can sit down with him and help him work out the Effect.

Make sure you cover exactly what the Effect will do. In the case of the salmon-leap, the mage must know exactly how high and far he wishes to go. Is there any other benefit to this Effect? (For example, CúChullain was said to do his salmon-leap across the magical lands and get wiser with each leap.)

You will also need to assure yourself that the mage has a good understanding, not only of the Sphere(s) of magic used, but the very mindset needed to connect with how the shamans of old approached their magic. If not, then it is unlikely the Effect will succeed. Accomplishing these Effects takes full understanding of how the ancient shamans thought. Just hoping that casting an Effect at Prime 4 will cause something similar to happen doesn't cut it.

You will need to determine the consequences for a botched Effect as well. Does the mage leap high but then incur falling damage on the way down? How severe is the Paradox backlash? These details aren't something you necessarily need to discuss with your player, as the mage wouldn't know the consequences of a failed Effect when treading on new magical ground.

self has connected with her for the purpose of reawakening this magic within her. This could be a simple and happy coincidence and the mage could use the Avatar's guidance as a way to learn. More often than not, however, it is likely the Avatar will have an agenda in making sure the mage becomes well versed in the old ways. These reasons for manifesting may not be good and wholesome; it could encompass revenge or a continuation of an ancient nefarious plan.

PARADOX, VULGARITY, AND THE OLD WAYS

Sadly, mages who investigate shamanistic magic in order to circumvent Paradox or find a way to do Vulgar magic in a

the Finns asked questions of spirits lounging in a sauna. Tools and Effects of divination are fairly harmless to the universe; it is only how you react to the answers you receive that concerns Paradox.

Tools for traversing the Gauntlet and avoiding the Avatar Storm are, however, available from the shamans. Taking the “soulflight” was a common occurrence, and making it easy on the soul was a goal the shaman didn’t take lightly. Studying the ways of the shaman should allow a mage to manage the trip to the Umbra much in the way a Storm shield helps them.

STORY HOOKS

These story hooks should help get you started forming ideas on where you want to take your mages as they learn the Effects and discover the secrets and Wonders of the ancient shamans. These can initiate your mages into questing for ancient Wonders, investigating crimes 2000 years old (Roman invasion, anyone?), or, most importantly, discovering ways the secrets of the shamans can be used to aid in the problems mages face today.

Shaman Initiation All Over Again

The Dreamspeakers have done their best to keep track of the old ways, but even they are surprised to learn the extent that ancient shamanistic workings have been lost. As what was old becomes new again, the Dreamspeakers will try to incorporate the old magic into current training of new shamans.

Best for a small group, this story starts out with the mages becoming students again, attempting to learn the new/old ways discovered by a mentor willing to teach. The mentor will teach them the old divination techniques and the discipline learned from the forced shapechange.

When the training is complete, the chronicle can take many different directions. A Storyteller can send the mages on a quest to uncover a Wonder, carry a message to the Umbra, or discover more hidden skills and magic.

Possible Problems: Shamans are not people who find it easy to work in groups. The Dreamspeakers are the most solitary Tradition, and getting them to congregate and follow a mentor is not a problem to be brushed aside. Also, the Storyteller must deal creatively with a mixed group getting instruction from a mage in a Tradition clearly not their own.

The Man Behind the Curtain

The ancient magic of the shamans of Europe is making itself apparent in the world again, almost as if someone is subtly causing it to happen. Oh, sure, the mages that stumble across this magic often feel as if it were their knowledge and skills — or their clever manipulation of those who possessed the knowledge initially — that brought it about. However, if they could stand back and view the larger picture, it would start to become obvious that they are being manipulated into discovering magic and items longs since thought dead. Lately,

books, ancient letters and clues toward uncovering items do seem to fall into the mages’ hands coincidentally....

While it is exciting for mages to find new uses for the familiar Spheres, and maybe run across a Wonder or two, the mage with an eye on her Ascension might want to find out what or who is behind all of this, and why it is important for the magic of the shamans to reenter the world.

One of the mages in question, it will be revealed, calls himself only Conchobar, and resides in a small port town in Wales. If your mages are clever enough to discover him and gain an audience with him, they will have only found the tip of the iceberg. Conchobar indeed has orchestrated the re-emergence of these discoveries — at least, some of them. What his agenda is, however, is anyone’s guess, much less who he’s working for, if anyone. A Storyteller may take this in any direction he likes. He should keep in mind, though, that the grander the conspiracy, the better.

Possible Problems: Conchobar should not be too easy to find. He’s an expert at subtle machinations; he will leave a very faint trail. Once found, it will take some clever dealings to gain an audience with him. This chronicle can easily become too difficult for a group of mages, and the Storyteller will have to expertly maneuver the dealings to the correct difficulty level: you don’t want the mages to find it too easy, but you don’t want it too difficult either.

Not the One

While some mages quest for the mysterious Conchobar (or other mysterious benefactors who are aiding their quest for old magic), others find themselves encountering oddly dangerous situations as they try to uncover the secrets of the shamans. There are too many roadblocks to make one assume that it’s coincidence; someone is trying to stop them from finding out things.

As they try to learn more, the danger gets more insistent and perilous, going from simple traps to angry spirits. Who is setting the watchdogs on the mages? Is it possible that the same Wolf who is pushing some mages towards the truth is pushing others away? Why? Does he not find them worthy? Is there someone among them who is pushing them into danger?

The mages must negotiate this chronicle with great care, as it is difficult to deal with something hostile when you do not know what you did to offend. The traps and dangers should get worse and worse, possibly culminating in the mages being captured and interrogated by angry spirits if they get too close to an answer to, well, anything.

Note: These are not the normal guardians or roadblocks a mage will encounter while searching for a Wonder or a reluctant mentor to teach the old ways. These mages will be facing trials or falling into traps before they even begin to smell that they’re following a trail.

Possible Problems: Your mages must remain completely in the dark during this chronicle; they will sometimes know they

are getting close to *something* before they are stopped, but more often than not, they will be stopped for no apparent reason. Keeping your mages entirely in the dark can make for a frustrat-

ing chronicle if handled poorly, so make sure to give your party a small victory now and then, even it is in the guise of information dropped by an Agent as the Agent is kicking their asses.





THE LOST EMPIRE ETRURIA

Most Learned Acaryas,

What follows is an annotated journal of my Hermetic Marabout-mate's recent adventure in Italy with his apprentice. He was directed to go there by the so called Sphinx, or Rogue Council, that has so recently had the Traditions in such an uproar. Knowing how the operations of this new player in Tradition politics might be of interest to you, I requested he keep this journal that I might pass on what was learned to you, my masters. Included are copies of my letters to Mr. Alexander, sent to aid him in his investigation as well as a forwarded transcript of the original message left for me by the Sphinx, as recorded by the Virtual Adept Darlana Newcastle.

*Sincerely,
Dr. Marcus Jackson*

On the Road to Etruria— Journal of Gawain Alexander

At Marcus' recommendation, I've begun a journal recording my experiences onsite here in Italy as a cat's paw of the mysterious Sphinx. Let me state right up front that I don't trust this enigmatic benefactor that has the rest of the Traditions jumping on its bandwagon. In my experience, if someone doesn't want you to know who he or she is, that person has something to hide that, were you to know it, would preclude you from working with said person. But the cabal had its vote, and I'm no shirker. But really, the most I expect to come home with is a whole lot of nothing and an "I told you so."

Day One — February 3, 2003

Jez and I landed at da Vinci International Airport with no mishaps and stayed for the night at Rome's Hotel Delle Muse. Tomorrow, we'll join a group traveling from the capital to Tarquinia to tour the Etruscan ruins there.

Day Two — February 4, 2003

I hate to say it, but maybe the Sphinx was on to something. While touring the ruins, we were shown to an area where archaeologists from the University of Rome are currently excavating a burial site dating to the time of the Roman republic. Suddenly, one of the archaeology students jumped up, calling for his teacher, a Professor Massimo Pallottino.⁽¹⁾ Using the magic at my command, I was able to overhear their conversation. They droned on about the archaeological significance of the fragment of pottery the young man had found, but the gist of what they discussed led me to believe that both professor and student were Awakened and that whatever was buried in that field held an almost religious significance to the two of them.

Needless to say, my apprentice and I decided to remain in Tarquinia rather than to return to Rome with the tour group. Some subtle mind magic made sure we wouldn't be missed.

Day Three — February 5, 2003

Using documentation produced by Dr. Jackson, Jez and I were able to secure jobs on the dig site, myself under the guise of an associate professor of history at Harvard University and Jez as an undergraduate student from that same institution. I noticed that the dig had shifted its focus from the previous day. Instead of working over the large area it had been sifting through yesterday, the team now seemed concentrated on the section of the site where the student had uncovered his potsherd the day before. Before lunch, the remainder of the amphora to which the potsherd belonged had been uncovered. Apparently, the vase was part of a funerary offering to one of the 12 *lucumones*, or high priests, of ancient Etruria. The hope was to find the priest's tomb intact.

Day Four — February 6, 2003

The second day on the job, and no sign of this lost tomb. I've been reading feelings of anxiety radiating from Professor Pallottino, but you could never tell by looking at the guy. He's cool as a cucumber when you talk to him. Professional but terse. I've become rather chummy with Dr. Lucrezia della Passaglia, however, an associate of Pallottino's from the University of Rome who's also working the dig site.⁽²⁾

Day Five — February 7, 2003

Still no sign of the tomb, though more artifacts from the period continue to turn up. Della Passaglia was able to convince the professor to accompany the two of us to a local bistro for dinner. While he seems polite enough, I'm getting a bad vibe from this guy. Lucrezia and I joked, ate, drank wine and basically had a good night out. With Pallottino, though, you could tell he was too preoccupied to have a good time. He said little and ate less, excusing himself not long after dinner, claiming that he had to get a good night's sleep for work tomorrow. But tomorrow's Saturday. The dig shuts down over the weekend. While I'm sure the university requires a fair amount of paperwork from the good professor, I got the distinct impression he was eager to get away from Dr. della Passaglia and myself. I wonder if he suspects something about me. Nothing to do but wait and see, I suppose.

SPH1632.I.03-x

Date received: ~1/03

Format: chalkboard

Primary recipient: Dr. Marcus Jackson

Witnesses: 0

Sphinx present: Y

Tracking attempted?: Y

Physical evidence: photograph

Recipient Tradition: Euthantos

Identities: none

Sphinx form: drawn on chalkboard

Tracking successful?: N

Delivery: Dr. Jackson reports that he discovered the text written on the blackboard of his classroom late Saturday afternoon while stopping by to set up a slideshow presentation for the following Monday. He himself had erased the board after Friday's classes and was taken aback to learn that someone had not only broken into a well-patrolled campus building but also knew somehow that Jackson was a mage. Working as he does educating Sleeper university students, Dr. Jackson has been quite careful to avoid unwanted scrutiny for fear of attracting Technocratic interest.

Transcript: (corroborated by photographic evidence) Something dark rises from Etruria, the stillborn cradle of the Pallottino. Do not go yourself to face this shade, lest its darkness swallow you. Let the knight and his squire ride forth to meet the dark, Celtic dawn versus Tyrrhenic dusk. From darkness' fall comes illumination. Enigma takes you where dogma cannot. We do not create the path to Ascension; we explore it.

Comments: Dr. Jackson's cabal features a Hermetic mage named Gawain Alexander, thought to be the knight mentioned in the Rogue Council's correspondence. He left for Italy the following day, his apprentice Jezebel Lee (the squire?) in tow. The outcome of the two's investigation remains unknown.

Day Six — February 8, 2003

Spent the day exploring the Etruscan necropolis with Jez. Some of the tombs are incredibly ornate, with beautiful painted frescoes of life in ancient Etruria. The structures are built like little apartments for the dead, very similar in layout to the homes they might have had in life. Like in Egyptian burials, many common items were interred with the deceased, apparently so he or she would have them in the afterlife. Some items, rather than being actually entombed themselves, were instead painted into the scenes on the tomb walls. Evidently, the presence of these artistic representations was enough to guarantee their presence in the Etruscan underworld. Weird, but cool.

Day Seven — February 9, 2003

I took the opportunity to attend morning Mass at the church of Santa Maria in Castello today, then I spent the day exploring Tarquinia's many medieval landmarks. Nothing of supernatural import to report, but I found the city's myriad towers, Romanesque churches and scenic gardens a refreshing break from digging in the nearby necropolis. One site that I found to be of particular relevance was the tower of Dante Alighieri, where the poet dwelled for a time after he was exiled from his native Florence. There was no evidence on hand to corroborate this theory, but I noticed that the time period that Dante dwelled here corresponded to when it was commonly believed he may have begun work on his *Divine Comedy*. Perhaps there is something peculiar to the nature of this region that makes those who live here more mindful of what lies just beyond the shroud that separates the realm of the living from that of the dead. Or maybe I'm just dwelling too much on this.³

Day Eight — February 10, 2003

Extremely uneventful. Violent thunderstorms kept the dig closed today. The weatherman says things should clear up tomorrow, being overcast in the morning and sunny by the afternoon. Too bad; I'm enjoying the long weekend. You can tell Pallottino isn't happy about the delay, though. He's been tromping through the hotel in a foul mood all day. I think my own nonchalant attitude about the whole affair only makes him that much angrier.

Day Nine — February 11, 2003

Today was miserable. The dig was soaked in water, so we spent the day slogging through mud up to our knees, sweating in the muggy heat and being eaten alive by biting flies and mosquitoes. Because of the conditions, going was slow, which failed to please our resident martinet, Professor Pallottino. Potsherds and fragments of bronze aren't cutting it for him anymore, I suppose. Whatever he believes may lie in the tomb we're looking for, it must be very important—or very dangerous—to make him lose his trademark stoicism. If we don't find what we're looking for soon, I swear I'm going to kill the jerk.

Day Ten — February 12, 2003

Paydirt. One of the archaeology students hit what appears to be the top of the entrance to the tomb we've been searching for. What we'd mistaken as a hill we now believe is, in fact, the tomb itself.⁴ There wasn't a lot of daylight left by the time we started excavating, but we did find a piece of pottery similar to that found last Monday by Roderigo Sdoia (Professor Pallottino's kind of weasely professional—and I'd wager magical—protégé). So, hopes are high for tomorrow.

Day Eleven — February 13, 2003

Well, late this afternoon, we finished clearing the entrance of what Pallottino's started calling the Tomb of the Priest. From what Drs. Pallottino and della Passaglia estimate (and despite what my false credentials say, I've got no business disputing them), the tomb dates to the fourth century BCE.⁵ In most respects, this tomb seems to be a typical rock-cut chamber tomb common in Tarquinia from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE. The one unique feature of the tomb was a golden seal placed across the tomb's double doors. On it was engraved in Latin the following message:

By order of Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator, consul of Rome, let no man disturb this tomb, as what lies within is abhorrent in the eyes of the gods and the state of Rome.

Also present was a symbol featuring a stylized Roman eagle grasping what appeared to be a caduceus. Pallottino was eager to open the tomb immediately and seemed likely to break the seal, despite objections raised by both della Passaglia and myself. Eventually we succeeded in convincing the professor that we lacked the time to open the tomb and begin cataloging whatever lies inside before the sun set, so he grudgingly agreed to wait to open the tomb until work resumed on Monday. I'm glad we convinced him. That'll give me the weekend to prepare for whatever we might find there.

Day Twelve — February 14, 2003

What is it with Italians and St. Valentines Day Massacres? Well, kudos to the professor. In stereotypical bull-headed mage fashion, Pallottino ignored the warnings of the inscriptions, the concerns of his colleague della Passaglia and the dictates of plain old common sense and opened the Tomb of the Priest early this morning. The problem I've found dealing with mages in general (and, yes, I'm sure you and the rest of the cabal get this from me too) is that when one can shape reality with one's mind, one can come to believe that makes one infallible. In other words, "Of course I'm right because what I believe to be right is reality."

Case in point, Professor Hubris here. Pallottino goes out to the dig site Friday night with his apprentice, that Sdoia kid. Luckily, I'd had Jez keep an eye on the kid, so she calls me on my cell phone to tell me they're making their move. By the time we got to the dig, you could practically feel the bad mojo — goose bumps, cold sweat, the works. It's dark, I guess they kept the halogen lights off so as not to attract attention. That's OK. A couple phrases in Enochian, and I'm good to go. While I'm fiddling with that, I have Jez check out the Umbra, specifically the Dark Umbra. You know I don't go in for that ooga-booga crap, but I got a bad feeling the professor and his apprentice might (probably because they remind me a lot of you, Marcus).

I could tell by the color leaving Jezebel's face that I wasn't going to like what she had to tell me. Before she even got around to that, she yanked the Seal of Solomon out from under her shirt and proceeded to chant in Enochian what I recognized as some kind of warding incantation against the Restless Dead. It looks like someone's been fooling around in my library while I'm away. Still, whatever the source of the rote, after I linked my mind with Jez's to get a lay of the spirit land, as it were, I was glad for it. I could make out the dimensions of the spirit ward only because the warded zone was the only part of the dig not crawling with fucking spectres. I guess I know now where the creepy feeling came from.

This sure as hell didn't bode well. Jez and I decided, with reservations, to make our way to the Tomb of the Priest and see if Pallottino and Sdoia had made it inside. The tomb's entrance had been forced open, the Latin seal split and cast aside. Idiots. A soft glow of light, probably from the archaeologists' flashlights, poured forth from inside the mausoleum. With little choice in the matter, Jez and I prepared to step through the doorway and into the tomb proper.

Suddenly, young Mr. Sdoia burst through the doorway, bleeding profusely from his eyes and with his right arm bent at an impossible angle. He fell at our feet screaming something about a "Nesna Nethshrac" being alive but not alive. I'm sure he was saying more, but between his excitement and fear and my limited command of Italian, that's what I got out of it. I'll never be able to get any more from him as he passed away from his injuries, and from fright, mere moments later.

This turn of events brought me up to DefCon Four. Apparently, there was some undead thing in this tomb, one powerful enough to take down an experienced mage and his apprentice (I assumed Pallottino didn't just allow his student to be murdered after all). Given the number of spectres buzzing around and talk of the undead, I thought maybe we were looking at facing a vampire necromancer like that one we ran across back in Boston.

That'll teach me to jump to conclusions. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Jez and I cautiously — very cautiously — entered the tomb, me clutching my .50 Desert Eagle, her the Seal of Solomon on the cord around her neck. Inside, I saw what appeared to be a pale older gentleman in a toga exchanging heated words in a language I couldn't understand, Etruscan I imagine, with Professor Pallottino, who was suspended in midair above the older man. Jez had me look at things through her eyes again and I could see that, rather than merely floating in midair, the archaeologist was being held aloft by two of the dig's myriad swarming spectres. I couldn't help but notice how the spectres resembled the blue demons painted on several of the necropolis' tombs, including this one — one of the archaeologist's discarded flashlights cast its light on a scene of torment painted centuries ago that eerily mirrored what Jez and I were now witness to.

The two men seemed oblivious to our presence, engrossed as they were in their argument. Given my limited Etruscan vocabulary, I think maybe Pallottino was trying to convince the other man that he was not a foreigner, or maybe it was servant, from Rome but a fellow Etruscan. Maybe it was the professor's clothes or his accent, but the other man — I can only guess this was the Nesna Nethshrac fellow Sdoia was talking about — wasn't buying it.⁶⁰ The two spectres holding Professor Pallottino pulled hard on both of the archaeologist's arms and I heard and saw the right one pop out of joint. Jez gasped at this, and the sound drew Nethshrac's attention. All I understood of what the older man said were the Etruscan words for "foreigner," "sacred offering," and Charontes, the servants of the Etruscan death god Charun — given that the two spectres hurled themselves against Jez's barrier, I'm guessing that's what the Etruscans called these guys.

When the spectres impacted the ward, Jez's Seal of Solomon began to glow softly. Nethshrac caught sight of the medallion and went absolutely ballistic. Screaming at the top of his lungs, he whirled on Professor Pallottino. Again, I didn't get most of it, but I got "priests" and "Turms," the Etruscan name for the Greek god Hermes. He called us priests of Hermes. He knew what we were, and he didn't seem happy to make our acquaintance. (You'd be surprised how many ancient creatures really dislike the Order, Marcus. Then again, maybe you wouldn't be.) The professor raised his left arm, and pleaded with the old man — I imagine for mercy — but to no avail. Nethshrac pointed his finger at Professor Pallottino and began to recite something in Etruscan. In response, the archaeologist began to scream wildly, writhing on the floor in agony. Maybe two seconds later, he exploded into a cloud of dust. This was magic — honest to God Awakened magic. This wasn't some vampire freed from two and a half millennia of entombment. With crystal clarity, it came to me what this thing must be. A liche. A murderous liche with a mad on for the Order of Hermes. Of which I was a member. And he was now aware of that fact.

Apparently, this guy somehow knew about the Order of Hermes, despite the fact that it would be over a millennium after the fall of Etruria before the Tradition was founded, and he wasn't fond of it.⁷⁷ I could feel him gathering some serious amounts of Quintessence up around himself, and I figured he was about to do to me and Jez what he'd just done to that poor son of a bitch Pallottino. Just then, rot started literally erupting on this guy like he'd contracted the granddaddy of all cases of leprosy. I guess this might have been the guy's first taste of modern Paradox. Welcome to the 21st century, jackass. I'd been itching for an excuse to try out this rote a buddy of mine from House Flambeau had e-mailed me. A dash of Prime, a whole lot of Forces — add the hollow-point round from a high-caliber handgun, and what have you got? A bisected cadaver that should just lie down if it knows what's good for it. From the look on its face, it was pretty obvious that they didn't have things like this where he was from. I'd never seen a corpse look surprised before. God willing, I never will again.

I would have finished the bastard off, but by that time, he wasn't the only one with a Paradox problem. Luckily, I don't think he had any idea how badly I was getting reamed by backlash because he quickly tried to exercise the better part of valor and get the hell out of Dodge. Actually, it might be fairer to say that he decided to dodge by getting to Hell. There was this door painted on the back wall of the tomb, and I'll be damned if it didn't swing open to reveal a yawning aperture leading into that fucking storm that's been blowing in the Dark Umbra for the last few years. It was obvious that this wasn't the Greco-Roman Underworld Mr. Toga was used to, but before he could decide whether to make the leap or not, he doubled over. I saw his nose fall off and his eyes shrivel up in their sockets. I'm just glad my apprentice's got good reflexes. She grabbed my gun from my twitching hand (just don't ask — stupid rote!) and squeezed off a couple of shots into the liche. Even without magic supplementing it, the Desert Eagle's got a *lot* of kick to it. Nethshrac took a header across the event horizon of his portal, and poof, he was gone. The door was back as a painting, and the spectres, for the most part, vanished. (I'm guessing those that stayed haunt these old ruins on a regular basis.)

We gave the tomb a quick once over and found a number of scrolls I imagine date back to the time of ancient Etruria, then Jez was able to drag my sorry ass back to the hotel and get me to my room via a service elevator. Before I sleep, I want to get these impressions down, so I'm dictating this to Jez. My own fine motor control is still shot all to hell. Forgive the entry's lack of professionalism, but I'm too tired to put on airs. I hope your Acaryas will understand. It's been a long night. Now that it's done, I'm off to bed.

Some Final Thoughts from Etruria — February 15, 2003

Look, I take back what I said about the Rogue Council. Whatever its motivation, the information the Council provided was spot on. There was something dark rising here in Tarquinia, something that needed to be stopped. The Council was also spot on about who to send. Despite your greater familiarity with both necromancy and ancient cultures, Marcus, had you been here, you would have found yourself in the same boat as Professor Pallottino. He was facing a creature on its home turf whose command of the necromantic arts was much greater his own. Similarly, your command of Life magic would have been countered by the magus' undead state, and any attempt by you to use Entropic effects would have attracted the swarming specters like moths to a flame. The liche's only apparent magical deficiency was in the discipline of Forces, an area of arcane study that is my specialty. Of the cabal, I was the one who had the best, maybe the only, chance to win against this creature. Even Jezebel's involvement was absolutely necessary for there to be a successful outcome to this mission. Her minor talent with Spirit magic allowed me to make my way to the tomb without being destroyed by spectres and held off said spirits long enough for me to deal with Nethshrac. Without her, I would have been at the creatures' mercy.

As it is, Nethshrac has been destroyed (I hope), and we've got a treasure trove of Etruscan mystical lore on our hands.⁷⁸ I don't know who this Sphinx guy is, but I sure as hell don't doubt these messages' validity anymore. Of course, just because the content of the Council's messages are true doesn't mean the Sphinx is itself on the up and up. Back in my Army days, we used to have this captain who liked to micromanage things and always keep the "big picture" to himself. It was always "need-to-know information," and me and my squad never needed to know anything except how to follow orders. But you see, even on today's battlefield, you can lose an officer and be unable to safely radio base for new orders. That's what happened to my squad in Mogadishu back in '93. Only me and two other guys made it out of that fight.

I wonder how much the Rogue Council knew about what was really going on here in Italy compared to how little was explained to us, the guys putting our asses on the line. Certainly, had I known to expect a liche, I would have come better prepared to combat one. Hell, had I known what was in the tomb, combat might well have been avoided in the first place.

We'll talk more about this when I get back to Boston. See you guys soon, and give Marla my love.⁷⁹

Gawain

Footnotes:

(1) Dr. Massimo Pallottino is considered by many to be the world's leading Etruscologist. And, as I understand it, members of his family make up some minor branch of our Euthanatos Tradition.

(2) I'm sure I've heard of this Dr. della Passaglia from somewhere, but I can't place where.

(3) Is it possible for a region this large to be, for lack of a better word, "haunted"? An interesting theory, one I may investigate further when time allows.

(4) Odd that two professional archaeologists and Gawain (a professional investigator) would make such a mistake. Perhaps, given what was revealed to be within the tomb, it was the result of some form of magical effect. If that's true, for the magic still to be operating even on such a limited and coincidental way 2,300 years later, the forces initially involved must have been staggering.

(5) This would place its construction to within the time period Etruscan Tarquinia fell into Roman hands. That might explain both the seal on the door and the contents of the tomb.

(6) Actually, "nesna nethshrac" is Etruscan for "prophet belonging to the dead," but given that we have no idea who this gentleman might have been in life, I suppose it's as good a name as any for him.

(7) I found this odd as well, so I did some research in the Harvard library and in my own somewhat more esoteric one, and it seems that there was an organization, perhaps a magically active one, operating in Rome at the time known as the Cult of Mercury. Perhaps it was these fellows that "Nethshrac" ran afoul of and mistook Gawain and Jezebel to be members of. Any connection to be made between this cult of Roman legionnaires and the modern Order of Hermes seems spurious at best.

(8) I fear Gawain's belief that a liche that somehow survived for over 2,000 years might be destroyed by an unpleasant trip to the Dark Umbra is wishful thinking, at best, and willful self-delusion, at worst. Unfortunately, I don't believe we've seen the last of this creature and that, as it was one of our Tradition who released the liche, it is our responsibility to return him to his place in the Cycle.

(9) Regrettably, such was not to be the case. When Jezebel returned from Italy, it was without Gawain. Apparently, while Jezebel was out mailing me the disc containing this very journal, Gawain was forcibly taken from his hotel room by a group of armed men in black paramilitary garb. When she returned to the room, she discovered it ransacked and the scrolls and Gawain missing. According to one guest Jezebel questioned who saw the men drive off in a black Humvee, the men's uniforms were each emblazoned with a patch of a stylized eye in a pentagon. According to the guest, the Hummer had an identical symbol on its doors. Rather than take her scheduled flight back from Rome, Jezebel stowed away on a ship leaving Tarquinia for Turkey, then flew in two weeks later from Istanbul.

Independent research on that symbol turns up the name Panopticon. Who or what Panopticon is, I have no idea. It seemed to operate like the Men in Black, but whether it is actually affiliated with the Technocracy or is some new threat crawling out of the woodworks has yet to be determined. As for the whereabouts of our missing friend, I don't even know where to begin looking, but I suspect that if the information in the scrolls Gawain found is deemed "important" enough by the Sphinx, it will be letting us know where to find him. Then, I imagine, we'll find out more than we ever wanted to know about this mysterious Panopticon.

THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK



The Etruscans were a people that lived on the Italian peninsula in the areas now known as Tuscany, Umbria and Latium, though they controlled a trade empire that spread much further. At its height, Etruria stretched from the Arno River in the north to the Tiber in the south, and from the Apennine Mountains in the east to the Tyrrhenian Sea in the west. Not native to the area, the Etruscans migrated from Lydia in Asia Minor soon after the events of the Trojan War, in the 13th century BCE.

Once there, the Etruscans under the leadership of two Lydian noblemen, Tarchun (who the city Tarchna is named for) and his brother Tyrrhenus (whose name became so associated with the Etruscans they were sometimes referred to as Tyrrhenians), established a league of 12 city-states. These were Arretium, Caisra, Clevsin, Curtun, Perusna, Fufluna, Veii, Tarchna, Vetluna, Felathri, Velzna and Velch.

For over 1,000 years, the Etruscans were the dominant power in Italy, building a civilization respected even by the Hellenistic Greeks, who found them an extremely devout people, even if they did question the respect with which they treated their womenfolk. In a way, the Etruscans engineered their own downfall, as in 753 BCE, they founded the city of Rome, which in less than 250 years expelled its Etruscan king and less than 250 years later finished its conquest of the last of the Etruscan city-states.

THE ETRUSCAN LANGUAGE

The language of the ancient Etruscans is one of the three great classical languages of Italy, the other two being Greek and Latin, but unlike the other two, no great works of literature survive written in the Etruscan tongue. Where there was once a great body of Etrurian literature made up of numerous religious texts, historical works and drama, now nothing remains but scattered remnants of text inscribed on the bases of statues and on tomb walls.

Also differing it from the other two languages is the fact that Etruscan is alien to the Indo-European language family. There are no other languages living or dead to which it can conclusively be linked except for a couple of isolated cases, Raetic in the alps, Lemnian from the isle of Lemnos and Camunic native to northwest Italy.

By the time of the Roman Empire, Etruscan had ceased to be spoken, though — much as Latin would later be — it continued to be studied by priests and scholars. As a matter of fact, Etruscan continued to be used in a religio-mystical context until late antiquity. The last recorded use of the language in this context was in the year 410 CE, when Etruscan priests were summoned, with Pope Innocent I's grudging consent, to call down lightning upon the Visigoths then invading Rome.

In the World of Darkness, Etruscan is a dead, indecipherable language understood only by certain members of the Pallottino family of Euthanatos mages and the occasional elder vampire or immortal mummy. Thus, characters will have a hard time decoding even the simplest message in Etruscan, much less complex holy works such as the Books of Lightning.

Despite this, a few fragments of Etruscan language survived the fall of Etruria as a power. The month of February, for instance, is named for the Etruscan god Februus; what we commonly call Roman numerals might more accurately be termed "Etruscan numerals," as it was the Etruscans who developed the system; and finally, the runic alphabet of Germany, a language of mystical import in its own right, was developed from the Etruscan alphabet, probably passed to the German peoples through the Etruscans' extensive trade empire.

ETRUSCAN RELIGION

The religion of Etruria had much in common with the two other great powers of the Mediterranean, Greece and Rome, sharing a number of similar divinities, but it remained distinct in character. The Greeks believed that their gods were similar in character to they themselves, subject to the same drives and foibles of humankind. The Roman religion was very much one based on strict rules of almost mercenary character — if a Roman citizen wished to receive a particular deity's favor he would buy that favor by dedicating a votive offering to the god in question. The Etruscans, on the other hand, had a relationship with their gods based on submission and placation.

The gods of the Etruscans communicated their desires to humanity in the form of various portents and omens. It was the job of the Etruscan priesthood to interpret these signs so that the people might avoid offending the gods and inviting their wrath.

The art of divination was revealed to the Etruscans in a manner not unlike that of Middle Eastern faiths such as Judaism and Zoroastrianism. One day, while plowing a field near the river Marta in Teruria, a farmer was surprised when a divine being in the shape of a small boy rose from the newly ploughed furrow. The excited cries of the farmer brought the *lucomones*, the Etrurian high priests, quickly to the scene. To them, the wise child chanted the sacred doctrine of divination, which they reverently listened to and recorded. Immediately after the revelation, the miraculous being fell dead and sank again into the ploughed earth. The boy-god's name was Tages, and he was believed to be the son of Genius and the grandson of Tinia, king of the gods. The Etruscan priests' record of this incident were known as the Tagetic Books. The books outlined the rules for better understanding the will and signs of the god and how, through actions such as sacrifices, libations and rites, the gods might best be propitiated.

PREDESTINATION

The Etruscans were the Calvinists of their time, firm believers in a preordained destiny. Though someone might, through prayer and sacrifice, postpone her fate, the end result was inevitable. The Etruscan Books of Fate stated that man was allocated a cycle of seven times 12 years by the gods. Anyone who lived past the allotted time lost the ability to understand the signs of the gods.

On a larger scale, it was believed that the gods had also prescribed the span of the Etruscan people. According to Etrurian religious doctrine, 10 saecula (a Latin word meaning lifetime or generation) were allotted to the Etruscan name. This estimate proved remarkably accurate, and it is often said that the Etruscans predicted their own downfall.

- from the desk of Dr. Marcus Jackson

Dear Gawain,

The following are a number of terms that any archaeologist involved the excavation of Etrurian tombs should be familiar with. I suggest you commit these to memory before beginning your work on the dig site. Also enclosed is the documentation you will need to secure you and Jezebel positions on the dig.

*Regards,
Dr. Marcus Jackson*

Lexicon

ais: god
apa: father
arim: monkey
ati: mother
atran: priest
avil: year
cecha: ritual
celu: sacred offering
cezp: five
ci: three
clan: son
disciplina etrusca: the Etruscan discipline; divination
ein: them, they
etera: servant or foreigner
fanu: sacred place
favi: grave
hinthial: soul, ghost
huth: four
in: it
lautun: family
lauxum: king
lictor: a magisterial assistant
mach: five
mech: people
mi: I
mini: me
mir: we

mun: tomb
mutana: sarcophagus
neftsh: nephew or grandson
nethshrac: a diviner, or haruspex
nes: dead person
nrph: nine
papa: grandfather
phersu: mask or actor
puia: wife
pulumchva: stars
rasna: Etruscan
ruva: brother
sacni: sanctuary
san: ancestor
sec: daughter
semph: seven
sha: six
shar: ten
spur: city
suthi: tomb
tamera: priest
thaur: tomb
thu: one
tivr: moon
truna: power
trutnut: fortune teller
vers: fire
zal: two
zeri: rite
zilach: magistrate

DISCIPLINA ETRUSCA

The Etruscans were the most renowned prognosticators of their time. Even after their League had crumbled, they continued to be consulted for their oracular skills throughout the period of the Roman Empire, even as late as AD 410, well into the era of Christian dominance. Much of Etrurian magical practice revolves around the divination of future events. What follows are several methods by which the mages of ancient Etruria foretold the future, each with a very different feel from the others. Thereby, players may pick and choose which is most appropriate for their characters' paradigm.

Versions of the following spells still exist in various caches throughout the world. Records and confiscated materials from the Roman Cult of Mercury still exist in several ancient Hermetic Chantries (perhaps even in the ruins of Mistridge). The Pallottino family still preserves a large number of Etruscan scrolls and artifacts in its familial estate. And now, the Technocracy, via its new cross-Convention arm

Panopticon, has impounded a veritable treasure trove of Etruscan miscellanea from Tarquinia's Tomb of the Priest. Of course, those mages already with a bent toward necromancy also have the option of contacting the ghosts of the ancient Etruscan priests themselves for instruction. And for the desperate, there's always Nesna Nethshrac...

HEPATOSCOPY [•• TIME]

By slaughtering an animal, usually a sheep, and examining its liver, a mage may gain knowledge of the future. The Etruscans were renowned for their ability at this form of divination and the augurs of ancient Rome learned the art from them, passing it down to modern times.

System: The mage seeking to learn the future ceremonially slaughters the sacrificial animal and then removes the animal's liver. This does not require a roll on the player's part, but if the mage has an appropriate Ability, such as Crafts (Butchery) or Medicine, the Storyteller may, at her discretion, allow successes gained from removing the liver to lower the difficulty of the Arete roll to divine the future, reflecting that the organ was removed more intact than it would have been by an amateur. For each success gained, the character gains more information about the future. Successes may be spent to either see further or with more clarity. Regardless of successes, this rote is colored both by the resonance of the sacrifice itself and the Etruscan mindset of gloomy predeterminism. Therefore, the information imparted to the caster of this rote tends to be of a negative nature, tinted harbingers of gloom and doom. Regardless of a mage's aptitude and power level, this rote is useless to any willworker over the age of 84.

READ THE LIGHTNING [•• FORCES, •• TIME OR •••• FORCES, •• TIME]

A divinatory practice unique to the Etruscans was that known as the *fulmines*, the interpretation of lightning, lightning strikes and thunder. The Etruscans had a number of sacred books, collectively known as the Books of Lightning, concerned exclusively with this art of divination. With this updated version of this practice, a mage may use this rote to call down a lightning strike for the purpose of foretelling the future. This strike may in no way be directed by the mage, as it would invalidate her attempt at prophecy. This rote has proved immensely popular with mages who value flash above substance, especially the willworkers of the Hermetic House Flambeau, who have at last found a form of divinatory practice they can get behind.

System: Using Forces, the mage calls down lightning in an effort to divine the future from the circumstances of the strike. For the level 2 Forces effect version, this requires stormy conditions, the level-4 version may be called anywhere. (A mage wishing to avoid Paradox, however, will wish to avoid casting the rote in impossible places, underground, in buildings and the like). The type of lightning produced, whether or not it forks, the thunder accompanying it, what it strikes and if it is destroyed and even the reaction of people



and animals to the bolt all contribute to the diviner's understanding. Roll Arete. For each success gained, the character gains more information about the future. Successes may be spent to either see further or with more clarity. The nature of this rote links it to unexpected phenomena and events outside of the mage's ability to predict or control that will come to impact the mage's life in the future like a bolt out of the blue. Regardless of a mage's aptitude and power level, this rote is useless to any willworker over the age of 84.

ETRUSCAN NECROMANCY

Apart from their ability at divination, the Etruscan priests were best known for their facility at necromancy. What follows is a brief example of the type of rotes the ancient mages used as well as the spirit of reverence in which they were designed, to give Storytellers an idea of how their own Etruscan rotes and Effects might be presented.

THE GATE OF CULSU

[•••• SPIRIT OR •••• CORRESPONDENCE,
•••• SPIRIT]

Within the ornate painted tombs of Etruria, there was invariably worked into the frescoes a representation of a doorway. This doorway was there to allow the spirits of the dead a portal into and out of the Underworld. Etruscan priests could also channel their magic through such portals to allow themselves access to the lands of the dead, that they might seek the council of those wise ancestors who dwelt there or might travel the roads of the dead to reach places within the living world that would be hard to reach by mundane means.

System: The mage draws a representation of a doorway, it may be as ornate and permanent as those within the Etruscan tombs or as simple and transitory as a chalk doodle.

Then the mage's player rolls Arete. With five or more successes, the rote succeeds and a gate to the corresponding point in the Dark Umbra swings wide. Five successes opens the door for just one turn; each success beyond that allows the mage to maintain the gate for an additional turn. The addition of Correspondence to the mix allows the gate to open into any part of the Dark Umbra.

THE KEY OF VANTH

[•• FORCES, •• MATTER, •• PRIME]

It was believed by the Etruscan people that the she-demon Vanth possessed a key by which she might unlock the tombs of the dead to deliver their inhabitants to the Underworld. In similar fashion, by brandishing a silver key and chanting in Etruscan, a mage using this rote calls forth the earthly remains of the dead from their resting places to do the bidding of the caster. Matter empowers the corpses' forms, while Forces imparts mobility and Prime fuels the dead forms' Patterns so they may continue without the mage's constant attention. Lacking any Mind or Spirit magic in their creation, these walking dead are mindless, only able to follow simple

commands given them by the mage ("Kill them my shambling minions!"). Complex orders and any semblance of tactics are beyond these creatures.

System: Roll Arete. The player must gain four successes for the rote to be effective, and the mage may animate an additional body for every success gained beyond that. These animate corpses have as many health levels as the Storyteller sees fit (depending on the condition of the corpse and its size), and have Strength 2 plus 2 per additional success spent.

WINGS OF THE LASA [••• LIFE, ••• SPIRIT]

The mages of ancient Etruria made many excursions into the Dark Umbra, seeking both knowledge and power. Named in honor of the winged guardians of Etruscan gravesites, Wings of the Lasa helped to facilitate these mages' journeys in the lands of the dead. When cast within the confines of the Underworld, this rote builds wings out of ambient spirit-matter, which sprout from the caster's shoulders and allow for flight through the deadlands. (Though not of interest to the death-obsessed Etruscan mages, it would probably require only a small modicum of research for a modern mage to develop a similar rote allowing for flight in the higher Umbral realms.)

System: Roll Arete. One success allows one turn of flight, two success imparts 10 turns of flight, three a scene, four a day, and five successes grants the wings to the caster for the entire duration of her Umbral journey. The flight is not terribly rapid, at most equal to the mage's jogging speed (unless Forces is employed to increase this speed), but the character may hover in place. The mage may bear aloft while flying anything he could carry normally.

WONDERS OF ETRURIA

If the mages of Etruria were great crafters of magical artifacts, few examples of their work have survived to the modern day. Of course, absorbed as their empire was by the burgeoning Roman Republic, it is possible that a number of wonders thought by the modern Traditions to have been crafted by the willworkers of ancient Rome might, in fact, be of Etruscan manufacture. As there is no easy way to prove such theories, the true extent of Etruscan magical artifice will probably never be known.

However, two examples of the Etruscans' craft have survived intact to the modern day. One is known to be in the possession of the Pallottino branch of the Euthanatos Tradition. The second is thought to be in Technocratic hands.

THE HAMMER OF CHARUN

Level 5 Artifact

It appears to be a large war hammer whose silver head is engraved with elaborate runes and carvings of scenes from the Underworld of Etruscan mythology. In Etruscan myth, Charun was a demon who brought death to his victims by means of the large, heavy hammer he wielded. In fact, this myth survived the fall of Etruria within the context of the Roman gladiato-



rial contests. At the end of a series of matches, a man would emerge from beneath the Coliseum wearing the guise of Charun and bearing a hammer with which he "mercifully" finished off any mortally wounded combatants. Even today, a version of this ancient myth is played out at the Vatican upon the demise of each Pontiff. When the Pope's death is discovered, the deceased's forehead is rapped three times with a small ceremonial silver hammer. Of course, this begs the question was the original Charun truly a hammer-wielding demon or was Charun the mage who created this Wonder only to have the aspect of death-god thrust upon him because of the artifact's effectiveness?

Whatever its origin, this artifact has but one purpose — to bring destruction to all it strikes. Swathed in the forces of Entropy, the hammer causes aggravated damage to all living beings and inanimate objects it strikes equal to the wielder's Strength + 3. The weapon is also a symbol of power and authority over the Charontes and lowers the difficulty of Intimidation and Leadership rolls made by the mage's player against these creatures by 2.

Gods of Etruria

- from the desk of Dr. Marcus Jackson

Dear Gawain,

One of the first Christian apologists, Arnobius wrote in the fourth century AD that "Etruria is the originator and mother of all superstitions." As such, it should come as no surprise that the ancient Etruscans worshiped a plethora of divinities, governing everything from prophecy to robbery.

A good number of these gods and goddesses were Etruscan versions of familiar Greek deities. It was through their one-time overlords the Etruscans that the Romans were introduced to this self same pantheon. These gods include:

Aita - The Etruscan version of the Greek god Hades, ruler of the Underworld.

Apulu - The Etruscan equivalent to the Greek Apollo, god of the arts, of archery and of divination. Apulu differed from his counterpart in that he was an Etruscan god of thunder and lightning rather than the sun.

Artumes - The counterpart to Apollo's sister Artemis and, like her, the goddess of the hunt. Also associated with night and death (like so many of Etruria's deities, see below).

Charun - Guardian of the Underworld, the counterpart to Greece's Charon. Unlike the Greek god, Charun was inhuman in appearance, winged with pointed ears and the nose of a vulture. Also, instead of merely ferrying souls to the domain of the dead, Charun takes on a more active role, using his great hammer to finish off the dying and then tormenting their souls in the afterlife.

Hercole - The Etrurian version of the Greek demigod Herakles.

Fuluns - The Etruscan equivalent to the Greek god Dionysus.

Menarva - Goddess of wisdom, war and crafts, born from the brow of Tinia as Athena was born of her father Zeus. With Tinia and Uni, she is part of a sacred triad in Etruscan religion.

Persipnei - The wife of Aita and Queen of the Underworld. The Etrurian counterpart of the Greek Persephone.

This artifact is believed to reside on the ancestral estate of the Pallottino family, a brood of Etruscan descent who have carried on the practices of the Etruscan priesthood to the modern day and are nominal members of the Euthanatoi.

THE PIACENZA LIVER

Level 1 Artifact

Discovered in a field in Setima di Gossolengo near Piacenza in 1877, this is a bronze instructional model of a sheep's liver used to teach the art of haruspicy to novice priests during their religious training. A mage character who learns the Etruscan necessary to read the inscriptions on the liver would be able to increase his own ability at divination by using the bronze liver as a guide when performing similar haruspicy, lowering the difficulty of such attempts by 2 when the liver is at hand to be used as a reference. Currently, however, the liver resides in a storage room in the Museo Civico in Piacenza, a Technocratic front for the New World Order in Northern Italy.

Tinia – The god of the sky and Etruscan version of the Greek god Zeus. Like Zeus, Tinia is the supreme god of his pantheon. In a divine triad with his wife Uni and daughter Menarva.

Turan – Goddess of love and beauty. The Etruscan Aphrodite.

Turms – Messenger of the gods and guide of the dead to the Underworld, like the Greek Hermes.

Tvath – Goddess of resurrection and, because of her affection for her daughter Persipnei, love for the dead. Etruscan version of the Greek Demeter.

Uni – The supreme goddess of the Etruscan pantheon, the wife of Tinia and, as a result, goddess of marriage. The Etruscan counterpart to the Greek Hera. Forms a triad with her husband Tinia and Menarva.

A unique facet of Etruscan religion was its preoccupation with death. This is evident in the preponderance of Etruscan deities tied to death and the Underworld. These include the aforementioned Aita, Artumes, Charun, Persipnei, Turms and Tvath, as well as:

Alpan – An attendant to Turan and one of the Lasa, a goddess of love and the Underworld.

Ancaru – Goddess of death.

the Charontes – Etruscan demons of death. These are the servants of Charun.

Culsu – A demoness who guards the entrance of the Underworld. She bears a torch and a pair of scissors for cutting the thread of life.

Februus – A god of the underworld and of purification. Even today, his sacred month, February, bears the god's name.

the Lasa – Female deities and companions to Turan, the Lasa are the winged guardians of graves.

Leinth – Faceless goddess who waits at the Underworld's gates with Aita.

Letham – Etruria's protector who dwells in the Underworld.

Mania – The guardian of the Underworld. Representations of her were hung in Etruscan homes to ward off evil.

Mantus – Another Etruscan god of the Underworld. He is also associated with the city Mantua (present-day Mantova).

Thethlumith – An Underworld deity associated with fate.

Tuchulcha – A horrific demoness of the Underworld, possessing great wings, snakes for hair and a bird's beak.

Vanth – The demoness of death and the Underworld. Her peacock-eyed wings grant Vanth omniscience, and she bears a key with which she opens tombs.

Vetis – Underworld god of destruction and death.

I hope this helps.

Sincerely,
Dr. Marcus Jackson

MONSTERS OF ETRURIA

Though by the time of Etruscan dominance of the Mediterranean the Bygones that once thronged the region were on the decline, Etruria was overrun by its own unique monsters. In Etruscan Italy, the dead did not rest soundly, but rather, stalked the countryside, threatening farmer and noble equally with their nightly predations. It was one of the

functions of the priest-mages to propitiate these undead creatures and lay them to rest. It was also within the priests' power to set such creatures upon the state's enemies — or their own. (Storytellers note that vampires were most assuredly one of Etruria's monstrous night predators and that the vaulted tombs of Etruria were quite often home to a now-defunct breed of vampire necromancers that hailed from the Etruscans' land of origin, Asia Minor.)

CHARONTES

During the time of the Etruscans, those poor souls who were the victims of extremely violent deaths or who did not receive proper burials and funerary rites were often unable to rest in peace, tormented by their time in the Underworld. These creatures were called Charontes by the priests of Etruria, named after the greatest of their kind, the demon of death known by the Etruscans as Charun.

Even in the modern day, little has changed. Souls still become warped by the manner of their deaths or by the torturous half-lives they endure after their demises. Such modern-day Charontes exist only to torment the living and the Restless Dead alike and may never be reasoned with — though, on occasion, they may be coerced, either magically or through a guarantee of the mage's endeavor bringing about tremendous suffering, into serving a powerful necromancer. Regardless of how he wins their support, at the first sign of weakness, the Charontes will turn on their erstwhile master and drag him screaming into oblivion.

Attributes: Strength 4 (only in the Dark Umbra), Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 0, Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 5, Dodge 2, Enigmas 3, Intimidation 2, Melee 3, Occult 1, Stealth 3

Willpower: 7

Suggested Powers: Most Charontes possess 10 health levels and suffer no wound penalties from damage. Also, they may be harmed only by Spirit/Entropy magic, while manifested in the physical world or by attacks made by those in the Dark Umbra. In addition, Charontes are naturally immaterial, able to pass through solid objects at will. They possess inhumanly acute senses, and know if a human being is near death. Finally, the Charontes operate with a limited hive-mind, and if one is in need, at least three more will answer his mental summons.

Individual Charontes typically have one or two useful preternatural abilities. One may enter and control dreams (similar to a Mind 3 Effect), typically twisting them into horrifying nightmares, appear in the material world (one Willpower per turn is required to manifest in solid form, otherwise the Charontes is merely a hideous but insubstantial apparition), create poltergeist phenomena (Forces 3 effects ranging from hurled cutlery to spontaneous combustion) or produce terrifying illusions (blood-curdling screams, swarms of flies, etc.).

Image: The only constant in Charontes appearance is that they are invariably hideous. Twisted by the torment they endured in the afterlife, these evil spirits wear the anger and spite they feel on their visages, the better to terrify and torment their myriad victims. Also, those who suffered violent deaths almost invariably still bear the wounds that killed them.

Notes: Though the Charontes find Entropic Effects as damaging as other wraiths do (see **Mage: The Ascension**, p. 282), such magic acts like a beacon to these creatures, drawing them like moths to a flame. Any mage using such

Effects while fighting Charontes may soon find herself overwhelmed by the creatures.

NESNA NETHSHRAC, THE LICHE

Background: The being now known as Nesna Nethshrac was born Larth Fulumchva in the 515th year of the Etrurian nation (approximately 414 BCE), the scion of an upper-class family in the Etruscan city of Tarchna (modern-day Tarquinia). Growing up during a resurgence of his people's power, young Larth enjoyed a lifestyle of comfort unimaginable to those living outside the ruling classes of Greece, Etruria and upstart Rome. His days were spent studying the *disciplina etrusca* at Tarchna's famed school of the priesthood. His nights were spent in the arms of one of the beautiful slaves for which the Etruscan people were rightly famed.

Larth proved to be an extremely gifted diviner and took up the duties of the priesthood while still a young man. With his burgeoning magical abilities and his tremendous reverence for the gods, Larth rose through the ranks of the Etruscan priesthood with unprecedented speed, becoming, in due time, the youngest *lucomone*, or high priest, Tarchna had ever had. Unfortunately, during Larth's lifetime, the sun was setting on the ancient empire of Etruria, while its former possession, Rome, which the Etruscans had founded, was beginning to take control of the Italian peninsula. Veii, one of the original Etruscan dodecapoli, had fallen to Rome on Larth's 18th birthday, but that was only the beginning of the end for the failing Mediterranean power.

As spiritual leader to the people of Tarchna, Larth felt responsible for not only their spiritual welfare, but also their physical well-being and safety. Only he could read the telltale signs of the gods' displeasure and advise the Etruscan people how best to regain the gods' favor. It was during this period that Larth first began experimenting with potions of Egyptian and Babylonian origin, seeking to arrest the effects of aging, so that he might continue to advise his people on the will of the gods.

In his 57th year, Tarchna and the other surviving Etrurian city-states fought Rome. Though the fighting ended three years later and Tarchna's leaders negotiated a truce with Rome three years after that, Larth could see the writing on the wall. He knew no treaty would last with the Romans. When they were ready, the Romans would return, and Larth needed to be there to aid his people in their time of greatest need.

Seeking therefore to arrest time's destruction of his oracular faculties, Larth uncovered a process by which he might cheat fate and extend both his life and his gifts indefinitely. In his 81st year, Larth passed his priestly duties on to a successor and withdrew from public life. Using his own command of Etruscan necromancy and secrets gleaned from sources in Egypt and Greece, Larth achieved immortality of a sort as the world's first liche. In the end, however, it was all for naught. A scant two years after the completion of the ritual of lichedom, Larth's divinatory powers failed him. It seems, aging or no, there was no escaping the seven times 12 year ban placed upon man by the gods.

For a long while, Larth was inconsolable. He had gone to incredible lengths to forestall his own death only so that his oracular powers might still aid his beloved Etruria in these dark times. And now, those abilities were gone.

Larth, now believing himself more dead than alive, retreated to a tomb he'd had constructed for himself in Tarchna's sprawling necropolis and sunk into a terrible melancholy. It took a visit from his own successor as Tarchna's high priest to bring Larth out of his depression. He assured Larth that, though the liche could not see the future himself, the remainder of the haruspices still could and that the high priest had himself divined that Larth had much more left to do. Larth's future, now beyond his own ability to discern, stretched beyond even the high priest's power to see.

Buoyed by his talk with the priest, Larth began to devise a method for the Etruscans to regain the favor of the gods from their enemies the Romans. For 20 years, Larth studied, gaining both in mundane knowledge and in magical power. Unfortunately for the Etruscan liche, the Romans possessed their own augurs and priests, diviners and holy men who had learned from the Etruscans themselves and still had their gods' favor. Through them, the Romans learned of Larth and the threat he posed. At the order of Consul Quintus Fabius Maximus Cunctator, an elite detachment of legionnaires under the command of three highly trained Cultists of Mercury was dispatched to Tarchna's necropolis to deal with the threat Larth posed. In a savage battle that left the legionnaires dead and one of the Cultists grievously wounded, the liche was forced into his tomb, where the mages were able to trap him. Using powerful charms of Saturn, they bound him in a moment they stretched to infinity. Sealing the tomb as ordered, the mages of the Cult of Mercury coaxed Tellus Mater into taking the tomb into her body. To keep outside forces from disturbing his rest, the threes called upon their patron Mercury to hide the tomb from those who would find it.

And for 2,300 years it remained hidden, but with time, even the strongest magics fail. Now, mistakenly called Nesna Nethshrac, the ancient liche is finally free of centuries of confinement.

Image: Originally, Nethshrac looked to be a man in his mid-50s, white haired and clean shaven, with piercing sky-blue eyes, pronounced cheek bones and a strong Roman nose, whose pale skin possessed just a hint of bluish tinge. However, the liche's first experience with the effects of modern Paradox have left vicious marks that will take quite some time to heal (assuming Nethshrac even allows himself the time necessary to bleed off his Paradox and to repair the damage wrought). Now, the ancient magus looks like nothing so much as a walking corpse. His flesh is withered, pulled taut over his bones. Missing now is the hawk-like nose, and his cheekbones jut through the skin in places. Worst of all, his once bright-blue eyes are now shriveled like two prunes and glow with a baleful azure light. Nethrac still wears the blood-spattered white toga he wore the night of his imprisonment by the Cult of Mercury.

Roleplaying Hints: You are a walking, talking survivor of the dawn of the High Mythic Age. Though you've spent eons imprisoned in your sepulchre-jail, you experienced none of that time, bound as you were by chains of temporal magic. It is as if the last 2,300 years never happened. Yet, great Etruria is no more. Even your enemies, the Romans, were conquered hundreds of years ago. And the bite of the she-bitch Paradox has found new, sharper teeth during the time of your incarceration. Clearly, the world has changed.

Still, you were one of the most powerful willworkers of your time, and that has not changed. Perhaps you will seek out the kin of the one who called himself Pallottino. He knew your tongue and some small measure of the old ways. With their help, you might come to understand this new age and its peoples. Then, you will see what may be done to make things right.

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Autocrat

Demeanor: Director

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, Wits 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 1, Athletics 1, Awareness 5, Brawl 1, Cosmology 4, Crafts 2, Enigmas 5, High Ritual 5, Intimidation 4, Leadership 4, Linguistics 3, Meditation 3, Melee 2, Occult 5, Science 2

Backgrounds: Avatar 5, Destiny 3, Notoriety 5, Uncanny 5

Arete: 9

Spheres: Entropy 4, Life 4, Matter 4, Mind 1, Prime 3, Spirit 4, Time 5

Willpower: 9

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 7

Resonance: (Entropic) Somber, (Static) Staid

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